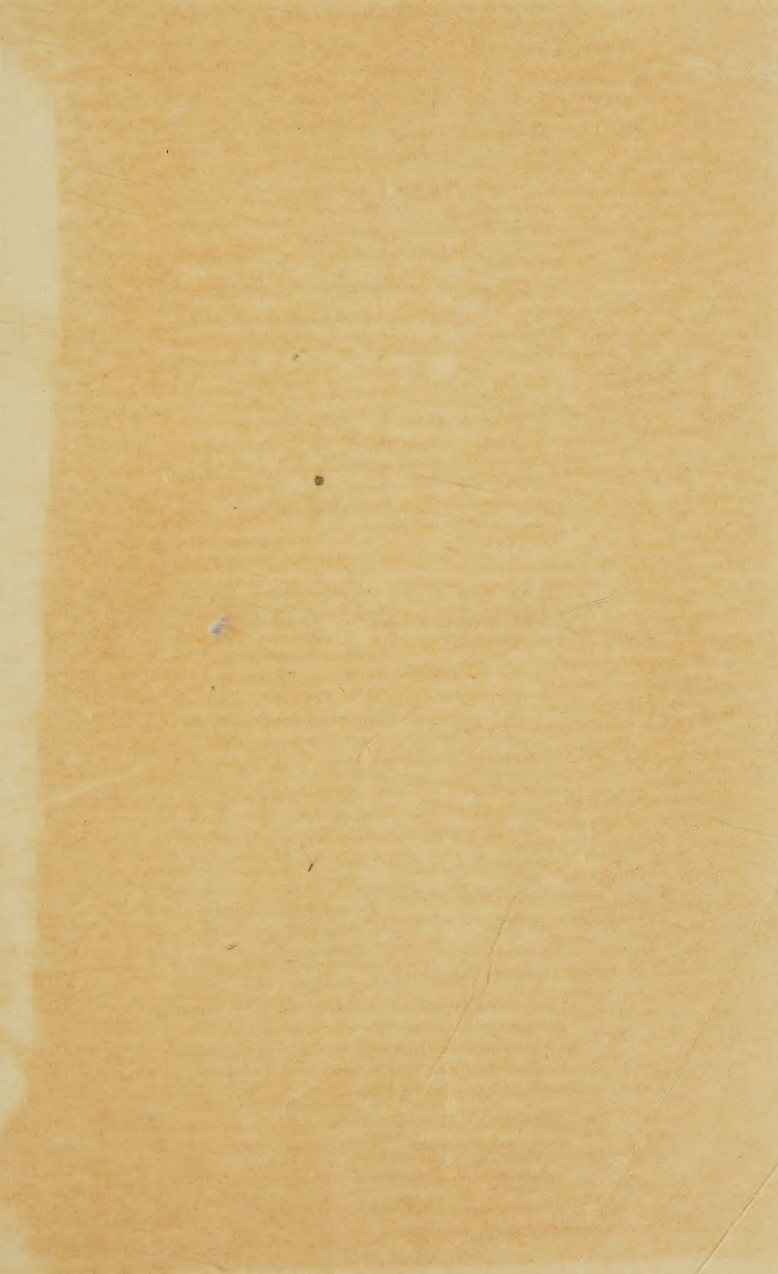
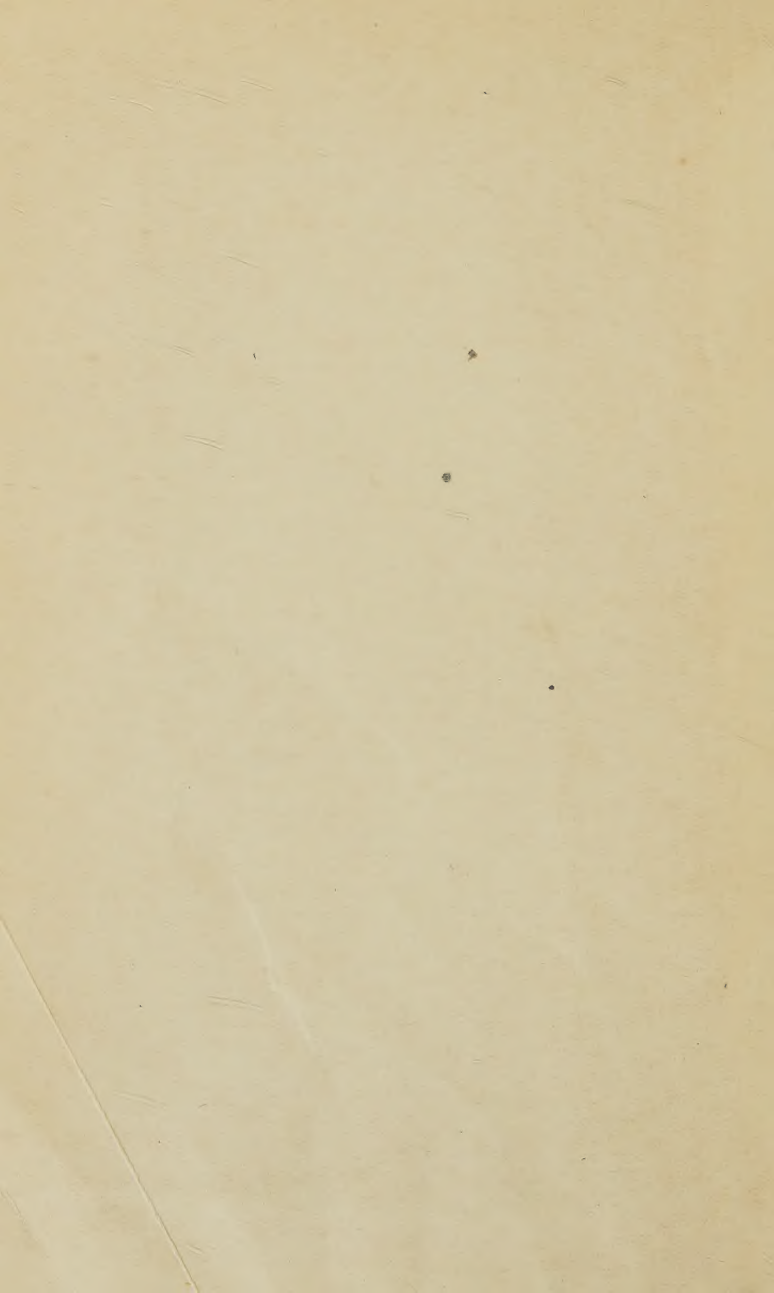




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IMITATORS OF CHRIST



# IMITATORS OF CHRIST

BY

ERNEST C. TANTON

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J. ALFRED SHARP


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To MARY,  
FOR SIX GLAD YEARS  
MY COMPANION AND LOVE;  
FOR EVER NOW  
MY LOVE AND INSPIRATION.



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## PREFACE

MANY who hear the call to the Imitation of Christ are discouraged from the start by the perplexity that His life is so high above ours, different not simply in degree but in quality, that any attempt to reproduce His excellencies promises at once to be unavailing. We seem doomed to failure at the outset; we can learn from Him, but we cannot learn to become like Him. So the natural place of the preface is an attempt to estimate the value of the Person of Christ as an example. If we are to profit at all from a reminder of those things in the life-story of Jesus which we are called to copy, we must first find cause to abandon this initial despair. 'Jesus was so different from us,' we say, 'He was divine, He was sinless; how can we be like Him? What value is the example of Christ to an ordinary man in a work-a-day world at a time like this?'

Jesus was divine and was sinless; we take nothing from the certainty of those truths; yet we dare assert that they give no cause for discouragement. Of all the heresies that surround the doctrine of the Person of Christ, one of the worst is the uncondemned heresy that Jesus was a man like we are. He was not! He was a man like we might have been, ought to have been. Jesus was a Normal Man; and all other men have been sub-normal through sin. The normal man, according to God's plan, is a divine man; and consequently sinless.

To dismiss as a myth the story of Adam is to lose easily a profound parable. In that story we see God's purposed normal man, and His hope for a world peopled by normal men. Adam was to be one who knew God, talked with God, knew what God wanted, was helped by God to do that. Man was made a little lower than the angels—lower only in the gift of a human body—the only part of him that was not divine. All else was made in God's own image. Man was made higher than the angels in that within him was the power to use his body, with all its limitations, as a servant of the divine, and to live a normal life within mortal bounds.

Man (personified in 'Adam') thwarted this purpose; and, for a time at least, wrecked this hope. All was spoiled by sin. The human family ceased to know God, to talk with Him, to understand God's will, and to be able because willing to receive the help it needed in those limitations. Man became involved instantly in a social state in which the normal sinless life became virtually impossible. Though made a little lower than the angels, sin brought him to a state much lower, to a state not much above the devils in some cases; only above the devils in all cases because of the persistence of the Divine Spirit that still strove within him. The story even suggests that this race of divine men was intended to be immortal without passing through death. It was sin that brought death into the world

. . . and all our woe.

Then, in the fullness of time, Jesus came; not one of that race of sub-normal men, yet not some superman raised up abnormally under ordinary



human conditions—but a perfect illustration of what God intended man should be, and would have been but for sin. St. Paul, indeed, calls Him the ‘Second Adam.’ He knew God, talked with God, knew what God wanted, and was helped by God to do that. He too was made a little lower than the angels, but He accepted and fulfilled the will of God, and we see Him crowned with glory and honour, as man would have been but for sin. He even ‘accepted’ death, which would not ordinarily have touched such a Man. He lay down His life ‘of Himself’; no man took it from Him, but He lay it down of Himself. The repetition is for emphasis. With this argument in mind, the whole of the resurrection chapter in 1 Corinthians becomes suffused with new meanings. Perhaps the best philosophy of the Incarnation is contained in Cardinal Newman’s verses:

When all was sin and shame,  
A second Adam to the fight  
And to the rescue came.  
And that a higher gift than grace  
Should flesh and blood refine,

(Mark that word ‘refine.’)

God’s presence, and His very self  
And essence all-divine.

Because Jesus was a normal man, therefore divine and sinless, those qualities were in Him that we are called to imitate. The difference between Him and us is not ultimately one of quality.

Yet has all this helped us very much after all? Is there not a terrifying distance between us and Him, in that the whole race of men is sub-normal? Two considerations follow. St. John uses a cer-

tain phrase interchangeably in regard to both Jesus and His followers. He says we are 'born of God,' and as such 'cannot commit sin.' At our conversion we are restored to the life of normal manhood. We begin then where Christ began at birth. We learn to know God, we begin to talk with God and so to know His will, we are made receptive to God's power. We are shown the true attitude to adopt towards sinning society. Our daily duty becomes the practice of the imitation of His life, for the life of Jesus becomes our norm and standard. Like Jesus, we are now born of God and established at last above the sub-normal life of ordinary men. Only relapses into sin will spoil this. Sin makes easy virtues hard, and difficult ones impossible. 'All things are possible to him that believeth.'

The other consideration is that we have in the spiritual presence of our Example, the energizing power which makes these things possible to us. As one strong personality gripping our hand and saying, 'You can,' increases our capacity, so the nearness of our Risen Lord helps. The word 'salvation' only comes once from the lips of Jesus in the Gospels, and there it has a different meaning than when used in the Old Testament and by the apostles later. It means 'safety and soundness.' Lives that are 'safe and sound,' lives like His, are possible. He brought this 'salvation' always by getting into touch with people. So, still! The Christian's life is reinforced every way by His close contact with us. Christians who have identified themselves with Him at their conversion may realize this helpful, daily Presence, empowering their feeble wills.

## SECTION I

### ‘LEARN FROM ME’

- I. ‘Scholars of the Yoke.’
- II. ‘Servants who Ransom.’
- III. ‘The Overlooked Sacrament.’



## STUDY I

### SCHOLARS OF THE YOKE

*Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.—Matt. xi. 28-30.*

PERHAPS as He rested at mid-day, the Carpenter of Nazareth had often seen the oxen, heavily yoked together, laboriously drawing their loaded carts up the steeps above the lake country. With the quick sight of a skilled craftsman, He had noticed where the yoke fitted ill. (No badly-fitting yoke ever left the workshop of Joseph.) Maybe, from sheer humanity, He had halted the wagon-team and removed from their necks the irksome yoke, taking one from His own store that fitted better to place upon them. Then, He had been quietly happy to see how the beasts of the road stepped forward with new energy, thankful for the more comfortably adjusted weight. The crowds that had heard the groans which attended a carelessly fitted yoke would appreciate the homeliness of this Teacher's parable. It was one of the 'agricultural touches' in which lay so much of the charm that the preaching of Jesus had for ordinary people.

For it was with a similar compassion that He saw His people troubled by an ungiving and ill-fitting Law; and, as He taught, some words read in the synagogue grouped themselves in His mind for utterance.

From Ecclesiasticus :

'Draw near unto me, ye unlearned, and dwell in the house of learning. . . . Put your neck under the yoke, and let your soul receive instruction.'

And from Jeremiah :

'Stand ye in the way and see; and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.'

Let the people, laden with burdens grievous to be borne, tiring and ready to fall, draw near and learn of Him—and they would find Him skilled as ever to supply an easier yoke that would make their burden light.

This reference to the passages in His mind suggests that it was the way as well as the yoke of which He was thinking. It is not simply as a compassionate onlooker that He stands to exchange an easy for an ill-adjusted yoke. He waits with one end of a yoke for two already resting on His shoulder. He is meek and lowly enough to become Himself subject to the yoking; and He calls for one who will be His true yoke-fellow. It might seem sufficient, indeed, that He should fit us in with humanity so well that life's burdens become bearable; but the ingenuity of His love devises a more



glorious thing. We must bear the yoke in company; then we may bear it in His company. It is His yoke: not alone the one that He fits, but the one that He shares. It is His burden, too. He shares that as well as gives it. By going in company with Him, keeping pace with His steps, it becomes light!

Life has been called<sup>1</sup> ‘a continuous succession of fellowships that carry us to a certain point.’ The mother hovers over her child from chair to chair, as he learns to walk; but, presently, he walks alone. The fellowship has been to a certain point. She takes him to school, but leaves him at the gate, beyond which he passes into other hands. She places him in business, where he must fashion his own life with the knowledge of the things he has learned in the fellowship with her; but the fellowship itself cannot continue beyond that certain point. She takes him to the marriage altar, and then steps back. Or if she be with him even unto her white hairs, the night comes when she passes forward, and he has to tread the way without her. It has all been ‘to a certain point.’ But the soul that is linked with Christ is in a fellowship that never leaves him solitary. It is tête-à-tête and heart-to-heart the whole way through. They can walk together, for they are agreed. When he is weary, the Companion stops for him to rest; but weariness comes seldom for very joy of the company. He can go farther and faster than he could alone. There is no plaintive asking if the road winds up-

<sup>1</sup> Rev. F. W. Norwood, D.D., in *The Cross and the Garden*, pp. 87, 88.

hill all the way; the miles speed by when yoked with Him.

Peter and James and John have been known to Bible students as the 'inner circle' of our Lord's disciples, because they went so often with Him where the others did not go. It was not that their Lord selected, had favourites in His family; but that each had entered the empty half of the yoke for two. The others followed Him; *they* went with Him. They alone of the disciples were suffered to go with Him to the house of Jairus, and hear His voice melt with tenderness of love in 'Get up, darling,' to the child sleeping in death. They were by Him on the exceeding high mountain, where the glory of His Godhead broke through the limits of His flesh, so that He was transfigured before them. The eight were left to tarry at the entry to Gethsemane; but those who were yoked with Him went farther, and were near Him in His agony and bloody sweat. The lonely heart of Jesus longed for the presence of His yoke-fellows; but what must they have learned of Him, as they went from place to place where mere followers could not go!

There is a joy and easement in the companionship; to walk under the yoke is as though to lie on a carpet of thornless roses.

In having all things, and not Thee, what have I?

Not having Thee, what have my labours got?

Let me enjoy but Thee, what further crave I?

And having Thee alone, what have I not?

But there is education, too; for such are companions, and scholars as well. We learn as we travel. We

must be imitators of Him before we can ever enjoy the yoked fellowship; for we must stoop our necks, as He has done, or we cannot walk with Him. A disciple is in the nature of the word, one who subjects himself to discipline. But, being so linked, we learn to be like Him by accompanying Him. There is here the whole programme for the imitation of Christ: ‘that they might be with Him.’ When folk live much together, each assimilates some of the other’s qualities. Darby lives with Joan until presently they grow to be alike in tastes, in ways of looking at things, even in facial features. But to live with a master-soul is to find all the exchange on one side alone. This truest imitation is unconscious. A cherished author will shape the style of the budding writer; and the writer may not discern how truly he has attained his author’s aspects and methods. A hero-preacher will instil his scheme of doctrine and his outlook on life in the mind of his constant and devoted listener. To be ever with Jesus is to become ever more and more like Him. Education by companionship achieves its highest results in comradeship with Him.

We would be like Thee,  
Show us the way,

we sang in our Sunday-school hymn. Here is the way shown clearly. Enter the yoke with Jesus; become His scholars as you have company with Him; and instinctively the most loved characteristics of His life will unknowingly be copied.

If you had the choice, which would you choose?—to hear Jesus expound the Scriptures in the syna-

gogue, or to go with Him for a ten miles' walk over the plains? Men have often wished that they might have had the privilege of standing in the crowd to listen to the words of gracious wisdom which proceeded from His mouth; but a wilderness walk with Him might have been even more enlightening. He would not let you miss one beauty in the landscape. Life is very sweet on the high roads with Jesus. 'There's day and night, brother; both sweet things; sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise a wind on the heath.'

The stork in the German fable travelled far; and, on his return, could tell nothing of the cities and streams and mountains by which he had passed; but he could discourse eloquently of the toothsome frogs he had found in a certain deep ditch! No one ever came back from a tour with Jesus, having found only material dainties. The eye of our Lord was always seeking truth and beauty and goodness—the three primary colours which brighten the otherwise black world and concentrate to make the pure white light of heaven. He lets no companion be long beside Him till He makes him see the glories of God around them that He has found. 'Consider,' He says, as we travel with Him; and the very word<sup>1</sup> shows His delight in the wonder of His Father's world. The Master is a past-master in the finding of true and good and beautiful things; and to travel with Him is to catch His enthusiasm for them. When God gives us a world to live in, He gives us also His Son to point out its marvels

<sup>1</sup> Latin: 'con' and 'sideris,' 'with the stars,' an open-air phrase!

and its meanings; to show us the violets in the hedgerows, the golden glory of the cornfields, the sky-lark singing in the air for very joy. The same happy contentment in the handiwork of God becomes that of His comrades. Appreciation of the World Beautiful and Good and True comes easily in association with Him, and only really so.

But, more sombrely, He teaches too the compassion for the multitude which throbbed so strongly in His heart. He knew the worth of a human heart to God; and measured them not in crowds, but units. There were no ‘untouchables’ in the world of Jesus. He respected human personality, even in its shame, and showed true Christ-courtesy in His contacts with the social outcasts. His love extended even to the heretics. He loved the child—who is ‘humanity reduced to its simplest terms.’<sup>1</sup> He regarded contempt for any human being as a most horrible crime.

This deep sense of the sacredness of human personality we too learn of Him as we enter His yoke. The burden of the souls of men falls on us as well as on Him, when we share with Him the travail that makes His Kingdom come. He reverses our estimates of worth. Dr. Laws founded the Christian mission in Livingstonia, toiled for five years, won a single convert, and the mission closed down at his death. His biographer says that many folk away in Scotland called the enterprise a failure. ‘They tabulated those first five years by book-keeping.’<sup>2</sup> Thus:

<sup>1</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *The Social Principles of Jesus*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Dan Crawford, *Back to the Long Grass*, p. 60.

## LIABILITIES.

5 European graves.

- 5 years' expenditure, £20,000.

5 years' hardship and toil.

## ASSETS.

1 convert.

1 abandoned station.

Supposing no future results had been forthcoming, would it have been worth while? Is one soul worth such a sum of money spent in its evangelizing; the more when you add to that the perils and heart-break of pioneering, and the heroic deaths of five fine saints? Laws did not count it a failure; he had learned by companionship with Jesus the value of one soul.

For Jesus transmuted men's estimates of human worth. Those who have learned of Him do not measure humanity by bulk, nor weigh it against bullion. There were a hundred sheep, said Jesus, and one went astray. 'One per cent.' the statistician at once calculates. There were ten pieces of silver, and one was lost. 'Ten per cent. loss.' There were two sons, and one was a prodigal. 'Fifty per cent.!' But God's value is not that of a hundred per cent. efficiency. That one sheep represented all the care the shepherd had given to the whole flock; that silver-piece contained the meaning of all the marriage promises that had been made when the chaplet was given and received; that errant lad was the object of all the love the father had bestowed on both. My measures are not your measures, saith the Lord. Every human soul represents all the care of God's providence, all the promises ever made to men, all the love outpoured on Calvary. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost;



and any child of God was too valuable and sacred ever to let be lost. His compassion is contagious. We see the multitude through His disintegrating glasses; and, as we walk with Him, we count no sacrifice too great, the spikenard in no alabaster box too costly, if by any means we may save one.

Where is He going?—this Jesus with the yoke upon His shoulder, who bids us share His journey with Him? Is it just to lead us out to know the glories of God’s world? Is it only to tell us as we walk of a merely academic compassion for the men God made and loves? There is higher business afoot. He is going to a cross; and, as we travel in His company, we shall learn the meaning of the great word ‘sacrifice.’ Not alone the need for it, but its joy. Devout souls might have come to the thought of a needed sacrifice, by study of the ways of the world and the signs of the times. The writer of the later chapters of Isaiah found it so, and engraved for ever the portrait of the Suffering Servant. It was a Man of Sorrows. All might have gained the truth of the need for sacrifice, if God had printed it in a book, or written it in clouds across the sky. But the joy of sacrifice is only understood as we walk in the yoke with Him who was happy-hearted even at the approach to Golgotha. Happy-hearted? Yes, surely! Beneath its very shadow He spoke of His joy. One who had learned His message well has told us that it was for the joy set before Him, that He endured the cross, the joy of bringing ransomed sinners back to God. To learn the secret of having a thrill of gladness at the point of martyrdom, when all who witness would say that one’s greatest sacrifice had been

unprofiting—can that be gained in any other way than by companying with One of whom it was true?

It was not wasted; and it was the joy of the certain success of His greatest offering that thrilled the compassionate heart of our Lord. Some have counted not their lives dear unto them, having grasped this lesson. It has cost them labours and lashes; imprisonments and stonings and shipwrecks; dangers from rivers and robbers, in town and desert; hardships and ‘many a sleepless night.’<sup>1</sup> For some it has meant the rack and the stake, the sword, the deadly germ of ‘the white man’s grave,’ the typhoid of a fetid slum.

A noble army, men and boys,  
The matron and the maid.

They endured, not having received the promised success of their sacrifice. Of them the world was not worthy. But there was a great gaiety in their hearts, which they had gained by walking in association with Jesus, who had no personal reasons for sorrow at Calvary, but only sorrow for the hard-heartedness and sin of those He died to save; even as He had no purely personal motives for any part of His earthly life. It was all ‘for their sakes,’ and He calls us to be imitators of Him.

### IN THE FELLOWSHIP

1. What did Peter and James and John learn particularly from the three recorded incidents when they went alone with Jesus?
2. How would Jesus on the broad highway explain the nearness of a viper to a violet?
3. It has been said that we only value people who are of some utility to us. Will this be untrue when we are ‘under the yoke’?

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Moffatt’s translation of 2 Cor. xi. 27.

## STUDY II

### ‘SERVANTS WHO RANSOM’

*Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.—Matt. xx. 26-28.*

IT is not so much the humility of Jesus to which this passage calls attention, though that is stated in express terms, as it is in both the other studies in this section. It was in humility that he stooped His neck to the yoke; it was in humility that He girded Himself with a towel and washed the feet of His followers; and it was in humility that He became the servant of all. Indeed, His humility seemed to Him the most characteristic thing about Himself. His disciples confessed that it was; in their references to Him, we shall find the wonder at that always in their minds. But Jesus was far too genuine in lowliness ever to boast of His humility. The mention of it is in every case subordinated to another appeal. In the matter of the yoking, it is implied but not stressed—in the interests of that call to fellowship with Him. In the story of the feet washing it is more prominent, but more prominent still is the call to similar self-abasing service. So here, though the

poverty of His earthly state is told—how ‘He took upon Himself the form of a servant’—it is the self-forgetting sympathy gained by entering into the lives of His friends that is the true significance of His words.

There is a paradox—‘truth standing on its head to attract attention’—in this phrase, but one infrequently noticed. The coming of Jesus to earth is closely associated with the word ‘servant’—which equals ‘slave.’<sup>1</sup> He came as a ‘slave’ to procure a ransom. But ransoms are paid for slaves, not by them! The words introduced by ‘and to give’ are not an afterthought suggested by a sense of incompleteness in the simile of the slave-condition; they represent the purpose and climax of an act of incarnation which was in itself the depth of sympathy.

From feelings of pity, some generous-hearted man may pay the purchase-price and set at liberty a slave whose miserable lot has moved him. That is splendid, but it is not what Jesus did. He came not as a gaitered and gauntleted spectator into the world’s slave-market to be touched to sudden, generous action by what He saw there. He ‘came’ to pay the ransom, and He came as one like themselves that He might know how urgently was the ransom needed. As Dr. Parker once cried in the City Temple, ‘He did not see the multitudes for the first time when He saw them on earth; He came to earth because He had seen them from heaven.’ We hear in His coming something like an echo of Old Testament words spoken to Moses: ‘The cry

<sup>1</sup> Greek, ‘διάκονος,’ ‘minister,’ is ‘servant’; ‘δοῦλος,’ ‘servant,’ is ‘slave.’

of My people has come unto Me, and I have seen the oppression with which they are oppressed. Now, therefore, I will go and bring My people out of bondage.’ Pity repeated itself in the heart of God, before the coming of Jesus. So He came to earth, in slavery like man’s, that He might endure with men their sad and shameful lot, so suffering as they suffered. Then, one with them, understanding their condition, with blood and tears, He earned the purchase price. If the difference between pity and sympathy is that sympathy ‘suffers alongside with,’ where pity ‘feels for’ from a distance, then the meaning of this passage is not simply the wonder of His humility, but that He touched the very bottom of the depths of sympathy. It is to this that the call to imitation is given—‘even as the Son of Man’ did must we do.

Our Lord is not giving a reasoned statement of the manner in which the Atonement would be effected; He is calling attention to the One by whom it would be made. These verses are the Biblical warrant for the ‘ransom theory’ of the Atonement, and have been a storm-centre of theological discussion. In ages where slavery has been rife, it has been this interpretation of the Cross which has won men’s love and allegiance. In the days of Anselm, and fifty years ago in the southern States of America, the illustration of a ransom-price was the aspect of the cross by which men best understood what Jesus did for us on Calvary. But in free countries, long years since emancipation, this aspect loses its appeal. Each age has given favour to that illustration of the doctrine which appealed to the surrounding conditions of

that age. With the full-orbed light of heaven, we shall see how each phase of truth accepted by the varying ages combines to make the complete understanding of why Christ died as He did. We may be content to defer an exhaustive rationale of the doctrine of Atonement, until the work of atoning the world is achieved. Meanwhile, it is foolish to discredit any theory of that timeless truth because the processes of time have made some other aspect of it more readily understood. The 'ransom theory' has been assailed in recent times; men have sought to discredit it by asking questions: To whom was the ransom paid—to God, to the devil, or to whom? Where no answer to this question was forthcoming, men have rejected the suggestions of the theory as unworthy of consideration. But it takes a wise man to ask questions; and perhaps that was not the wisest question to be asked of the 'ransom theory.' Maybe we have been misled when we would reject its contribution to truth, because it does not satisfy some question which fuller understanding might tell us was not aptly asked. Jesus was not seeking to show, by His reference to the ransom, the way by which He would secure freedom for men. He answers the question 'By whom?' not the one that asks 'To whom?' This is a fairer inquiry, and the paradox of His teaching asserts, as we have seen, that the ransom was paid by One who was Himself living under the slave rule.

The spiritual slavery under which men groan is the immediate result of sin. There is food for thought in the curse which Noah pronounced upon his grandson Canaan, the son of Ham, in the story



of Genesis. At the time of Noah’s drunkenness, Ham went out to chuckle over his father’s disgrace. To him and his descendants this was counted for sin. The penalty of that sin was to be slavery. ‘Cursed be Canaan (the son of Ham); a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.’ ‘How wonderfully has this word been fulfilled in history! Canaan was subjugated by Israel, and the Canaanites became the servants of the Semitic race; while, in a still wider sense, the descendants of Ham, in Africa, have for centuries been the slaves and hirelings of the Japhethic races.’<sup>1</sup> Sin breaks fellowships, both between man and God, and between men and men. By sin we have involved ourselves in a social state which is often virtual, and often actual, slavery. It was in this social state that Jesus came to live, becoming one with us in the degradation which we had made through wicked folly.

Perhaps the worst feature of the slave’s lot is his ignorance of any design in the work he is appointed to do. He is working without a plan, working out a purpose of which he has no knowledge. It is the meaninglessness of it all that is the worst. ‘It is not that he is overworked, that he is poor and despised, that his back aches with the strain of the task and the lash of the taskmaster. Men have chosen these things and worse than these, when by them they have gained some end of their own desire. But when he must endure all these to work out the purposes of another, purposes which have not been hinted to him and with which he would perhaps have no sympathy if he knew them; to be

<sup>1</sup>*Altars of Earth*, by Hubert L. Simpson, M.A., p. 166.

robbed of everything that constitutes manhood and independent, individual life—that is slavery.’<sup>1</sup> Dr. Marcus Dods quotes Carlyle: ‘Here on earth we are soldiers, fighting in a foreign land, that understand not the plan of campaign, and have no need to understand it, seeing what is at our hand to be done.’ He comments that that is excellent counsel for slaves, but not descriptive of the life we are meant for.

We were meant to know the will of God, and to share intelligently in God’s great plan for men. Before Jesus came and where His influence has not reached, men still are in a slave state where they do the work of the world because they happen to be in it, but with the degradation of those who know not for what purpose it all is. To such:

’Tis nothing but a magic shadow-show,  
 Played in a box whose candle is the sun,  
 Round which we phantom figures come and go.  
 ’Tis all a chequer-board of nights and days,  
 Where Destiny with men for pieces plays,  
 Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays,  
 And one by one back in the closet lays.  
 The ball no question makes of ayes and noes,  
 But right or left, as strikes the player goes;  
 And He that tossed thee down into the field,  
 He knows about it all—He knows, HE knows.

But as for such, they know not what their Lord doeth. Carlyle when he is wrapped in the spirit of the slave has nothing to teach us. Omar Khayyam is only trying to reconcile himself to our lot, and that is not our lot! God never meant us to be slaves, nor to work in drudgery at a treadmill,

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Marcus Dods’ *Commentary on St. John’s Gospel*, vol. ii., pp. 193, 194.

nor to be sailors shipped to an unknown port, nor soldiers fighting with no share in a common cause, nor workers on a tapestry whose pattern we could not understand—doing the world’s work because we are here, but knowing nothing of its meaning. Since Jesus came, we are no longer vague, unsubstantial figures in a lantern show; nor chess-pieces, wooden and lifeless, in the control of a master player; nor playing-balls tossed about the field at the will of an athlete who only knows what he is doing with us. We can dismiss the illustrations of the pessimists as inappropriate. Because He came to be a fellow slave with us, He has raised us to be fellow ransomers with Him. We are to share in the redemptive purpose, and to banish by His power the sin that brought death into the world and all our serfdom. We ourselves are free, inasmuch as we know now what is the design of God; but we are freed so that we may free others, and spread around the emancipating gospel which He brought.

We are to ransom others, even as He ransomed us; to the point of sacrifice in time or comfort or leisure, even of life itself. Our Lord fulfilled His work by living with men, and understanding how irksome and degrading is a social state which is under the domination of sin. Our similar incarnation comes by prayer. An enlightened mind with a sanctified imagination at prayer is able to enter into the tragedies and woes of men. Our Bethlehem is the time when in intercession we understand and become burdened with the world’s need of redemption. This leads us on to our Calvary, when we will devote the whole of life to lifting men into the

freedom wherewith Christ has made us free—the glorious liberty of the children of God. So we are to be imitators of Him, to gain His sympathy and to offer up the sacrifice of ourselves, as He offered Himself once for all upon the cross.

It is a question if we have ever really prayed for others, if in our intercession we have never shared the agony of the Garden of Gethsemane. Prayer can be a very bitter thing. It is no mere asking God for casual gifts for others and ourselves; no happy chit-chat with a complacent Father, when we are entering into the sins of the world. If He sweated great drops of blood when He prayed in His own agony, what must not have been the burden on our Lord's heart when He prayed on the hillside for His friends? For the concerns of His friends were ever more clamant in His heart than His own distresses. 'Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee; but I have prayed for thee.' That prayer was something more than 'O Father, take care of Simon Peter and keep him from sin.' There were hours of prayer for that endangered disciple; concentrated hours, perhaps, but all the more intense for that. Can it have been that the tempter had first picked out Simon to betray his Lord, and failed because of that time of prayer and of something in Simon's heart that made response to that agonized petition on the mountain in the dawn? Jesus had been thinking Himself into the circumstances of that man, and the terror of his danger was the measure of His sympathy.

Sympathy comes so, even more than by going out among the people. The endeavour comes later

in sacrificial service, but to know the weariness and heartbreak of a life lived under the slavery of sin comes first in a sympathy which is gained through prayer. Before we offer our intercessions for others, whether they be the wreckage in a city slum, the natives in Nigeria, or our next-door neighbour undergoing hardship, let us first learn the way of Christ's sympathy by living in imagination with such in their need.

Christ, look upon us in this city,  
And keep our sympathy and pity  
Fresh, and our faces heavenward;  
Lest we grow hard.

When we have gained such sympathy with men as Jesus had, we shall be able to pray for them, and such prayer may be the greatest service we may render them. In the mystery of God's ways, He may be waiting for such prayer as that to release forces for the helping of mankind that are bound while He looks and wonders that there is no intercessor. Those who are able to serve in prayer become great—in the service of their fellows. The soul that enters into the feeling of another's infirmities by humbly stooping from his self-engrossment to living in sympathy with another in his sad state, is copying his Lord, who took the form of such a servant, and he becomes chief among the servants and friends of God. The busy worker who hurries about his Christian service with scant time for prayer,

. . . the restless will  
That hurries to and fro,  
Seeking for some great thing to do,

may not be doing the greatest service in the King-

dom of Heaven. That may be accounted by the Great Assessor as having been rendered by the cheerful Christian in the sick-room, who bears up in understanding prayer the needs of those with whom she lives in sanctified imagination. These, being fellow servants with their Lord, are made to be fellow redeemers with Him; and to them is great glory.

But it is certain that such when they rise from their prayer will be possessed of mighty powers of effort too. Sympathy is only the prelude to action. The preacher who in prayer has learned real sympathy with the state of those to whom he speaks will have found the one message to help, which he might never have reached after long groping round with prayerless preparation. The rushed organizer in social affairs might find much per cent. of his toil not needed, because he has gained the insight to find the one thing needful, having taken upon himself in prayer the burden of those whom he seeks to serve.

The comparison goes back farther than that of the mere prayers and service of Jesus. We can only come to ransom by the way of fervent prayer; but so, we as surely enter into the slave-life of our fellows as when He who was born of the Virgin Mary entered into ours. Thus incarnated with Him, we are constrained to serve to the uttermost, giving all that we may redeem them from sin and pay the ransom price of their slavery. For He gave all.

IN THE FELLOWSHIP

1. The difference between ‘sympathy’ and ‘pity’ is suggested in the study. Is there any shade of difference between ‘sympathy’ and ‘compassion’?
2. How has society come under the bondage of slave-existence through sin?
3. If Simon were saved from betraying his Lord by his Lord’s prayer, why was not Judas saved similarly?



### STUDY III

#### ‘THE OVERLOOKED SACRAMENT’

*If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.—John xiii. 14, 15.*

THE Africans in ‘Thinking Black’ land have a proverb that the lowest tree casts the greatest shadow. There is very little rest in the shade of a lofty soul, for there is very little shade! But Jesus could invite all the weary and heavy-laden to come to Him and rest. They sit under His shadow ‘with great delight,’ and the reach of this area of rest is the greater because in humility He brought the shadow of the Almighty round about the limits of a human life. And as Ruskin said of the rose, so we say of Him who is the Rose of Sharon: ‘all the shadows are colour-shadows.’

Yet here again it is not His own humility which He is stressing. No one who has read these sayings of Jesus can ever after forget that to be imitators of Him must mean that we shall be lowly too. But His self-abasement always served a purpose. Here it is a definite service of refreshment, in love for those who looked to Him as Master and Lord. Jesus was as near to contempt as He

could ever get when He saw the purse-proud rushing forward to get the chief places at banquets, expecting to be waited on as though they were lords and masters of mankind. He rose from supper, anticipating any such action on the part of any other and subtly conveying a perhaps undeserved compliment to His friends that each had been only waiting for the feast to end before setting about the same task; He girded Himself with a towel, having laid aside His robes; and He, their Master and Lord, washed their feet, refusing to be constrained from a menial task unworthy of His sovereignty! What He did they knew not then; but when the twelfth had been cleansed—even Judas—He spoke the call to imitation. ‘Ye ought also’—a hint, not a command; but love reads all hints from the loved one as commands; ‘ye ought also to wash one another’s feet.’

It is significant that St. John nowhere records the institution of the Lord’s Supper, but places instead this overlooked sacrament of the foot-washing. Writing as he did so many years after the establishment of the Christian Church, this apostle had little need to record the call to eat the bread and drink the wine in remembrance of the Lord. All who partook were familiar with the story of its ordaining; and the Sacrament was in the customary services of the Christian society. But this ordinance had been neglected. It was an easy duty to kneel at the Lord’s Table and take the elements from the hands of the presiding elder. It was conspicuously hard to celebrate that other rite, to divest oneself of dignity and do the menial task in service of one’s fellows. May it not

have been our Lord's intention that His followers should perpetuate the one as well as the other? 'Do this,' and 'Ye should do,' are almost identical charges; but we have rejected the acted parable of the feet-washing, and generally remember it only as a sublime instance of the graciousness of Jesus. Yet that 'ye ought also' does suggest that the symbolic act was somehow to be incorporated in the ritual of the followers of Christ. In a new civilization so far away from hot and dusty lands, it would need to be adapted and modernized; but we have adapted and modernized the Lord's Supper, retaining its essential meaning. There should surely be, as regularly as our partaking of the Holy Communion, some act of lowly service which we would do to others in memory of Him who washed the tired and stained feet of His followers, and bade us do likewise.

There is evidently some connexion between this action and the completeness of fellowship which Jesus wished to gain with His disciples; for, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.' Friendships may be ratified in many ways, but in no way more surely than by the giving and accepting of a sorely needed service. This is even more certain to induce gratitude than a gift, which may be given with a lordly flourish out of untold riches, or accepted with the discontented feeling that in the circumstances it might have been more. There is no such air and manner about a symbolic washing of the feet. Gratitude is one of the milestones on the way to love; and fellowship is the payment that results for services rendered.

The emphasis laid on the little debate with

Peter insists that there must be a grace of acceptance as well as the will to serve. He who will not stoop to do lowly service is incapable of real fellowship; but the high and mighty by his own nature puts himself out of the reach of the offered fellowship. Peter and ten others were served by their Lord, and therefore had part with Him. But Judas was washed as well, yet had no part—for almost immediately he went out to complete his bargain with the chief priests. A man's heart must be hard indeed who can resist such an appeal for fellowship. This was at least the first of no less than three great appeals that followed our Lord's prayers for Judas. But he would not respond, being too hardened by disappointment, hot revolutionary temper, and greed. Else he might have been saved from the betrayal as we suggest that Peter was.

The grace to receive such a service worthily must be present if fellowship is to result. Peter had it, and Judas had not—that was the difference. Satan had to be content with a second best from Peter; he became the denier instead of the betrayer. There was not enough grace to keep him altogether true, in spite of the prayers and love of Jesus. But Judas had none—his Lord's prayers for him were impossible of answer, the love was wasted. Peter had enough to let him be won back after his fault; but Judas hanged himself. Our Lord's prayers and efforts for both were the same; but they failed with Judas because he had not the will to respond. The offer of fellowship failed, he had ‘no part’ with his Lord.

It is one of the most difficult things in the

world to receive service gracefully. We are either too embarrassed to say much at all, or we try to make some return. Either we pass a vote of thanks to the toiler, a vote which we say in our speech is entirely inadequate, or we vote the payment of an honorarium! Either we give the faithful worker for his fellows a decoration in the honours' list, or we neglect him and take his efforts for granted. The return is as insufficient in the one case as in the other. The only return that loving service asks is fellowship. The true payment is gratitude which leads to love. Generous actions cannot be paid for with the gold of Ophir, the precious onyx or the sapphire; but they are wonderfully potent in binding hearts together.

When Geraint, in the 'Idylls of the King,' rode forth to avenge an insult to Queen Guinevere, he carried his noble lady's pledge that if ever he returned successful from his exploit, she would clothe whatever bride he brought.

Ere you wed with any, bring your bride,  
And I, were she the daughter of a king,  
Yea, tho' she were a beggar from the hedge,  
Will clothe her for her bridals like the sun.

Geraint finds Enid, the daughter of a despoiled earl; he rescues the family fortunes by defeating the traitor who secured their downfall. Then when he would ride forth with her to their marriage, he insists that she shall wear the faded silk in which he met her. Though the restored estate of her father has made it possible for her to put on 'gay apparel as might well beseem his princess,' he remembers his queen's promise, and in explanation of his strange request declares,

. . . (I) likewise thought perhaps,  
That service done so graciously would bind  
The two together; for I wish the two  
To love each other.

Service unifies hearts as nothing else on earth can do.

Notice in parenthesis the winsome way in which Jesus Himself accepted service rendered Him: the cup of water at Sychar, the outpoured ointment, the hospitality at Bethany, and in a hundred homes. It was one of the marks of the perfect breeding of the Gentleman of Nazareth, that He could accept generous service worthily. He never spoiled the offering by trying to appraise it with a monetary or any other reward; in every case He simply gave a larger love and a fuller fellowship. If we would have fellowship with Him we must know how to accept the service that His greatest self-abasement brought, ‘even the death of the cross.’ The only fitting way of recognizing that great service done for men is by letting gratitude for it deepen into love for Him.

We must imitate Him, however, not only in how we respond to the gifts of lowly service, but by offering the similar self-forgetting act. Peter came nearest to His manner in this incident, but the story is not told that we might be imitators of Simon Peter. Fellowship may come by receiving service worthily; but as our Lord said in a word that only St. Paul has saved from oblivion, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ If we would have fellowship with Him, it must be by serving Him as well as by accepting the service that He gave. If we would have fellowship with one another, it must be



by offering to wash the feet of our brethren as well as by sitting to be tended to ourselves. That is how communion with Him is deepened and friendship with them ensured.

Washing is the old sacred figure of moral purification. When Peter understood that there was this ethical meaning behind the act, and that if Jesus had not purified him, just as in the event of that moment he had washed his feet, he would still have had his sinful nature clinging to him and would have no share with his Lord in the possession of eternal salvation—then he failed to understand why it should be that one part only of his body should be cleansed. Could it mean that his Master would only partly purify him? 'Lord, not my feet only; but also my hands and my head!' That is as if he said, 'If you mean that you are cleansing me from my old sinful nature, then cleanse me utterly.'

By this he showed that he had read the symbol of the act, but yet not fully. 'He who has bathed,' replies Jesus, 'needs nothing further than to have taken from him the dust of the road that has clung to him through walking.' By His love He had purified them utterly. ('Now ye are clean; but not all!' There was one in the company, for He spoke of Judas Iscariot, who had frustrated in his own case the purifying influence of that union with Himself.) 'You have been cleansed from sin in every part, but there are individual defilements gained from time to time in intercourse with life.' How heavy any paraphrase of the words of our Lord almost necessarily becomes! That is His meaning, however. We have been bathed once for all, but from time to time we must be cleansed.



It is significant that Jesus does not call us to imitate Him in the entire cleansing of other lives. That is impossible to us; it can be done only by the Lord of all good life. But we are called to copy Him in taking away from men those smaller defilements which cling to the once-washed by their contacts with an evil world. In spite of many commentators, it is impossible to resist the conviction that it was a purifying ministry to which He called us in these words. The notion of ethical purification must be very strictly and firmly continued into the rest of the passage. It was not just a call to a token of love and a self-abnegating service. He meant that as He by a symbol and in reality purified His once-cleansed disciples from the grit and dust of evil that they had gathered on the highways of life, so ‘we ought also’ to purify one another from those stains that we can cleanse. The bathing of regeneration is out of our power; He only can give that; but in a sacrament of fellowship we must remove from one another the stains that each has gathered.

How can this be done? If it is not reading too much into the parable, it means that we shall use a cleansing source outside ourselves, **but yet** within our reach. He took water. To rub our own human hands over the stains of another only makes the defilement worse. But the purifying power of the grace of God, within our reach, must be made available for them by our efforts. Once again this is done in intercessory prayer, when we lave the feet of our fellows with a cleansing element outside ourselves. It is done by the tender rebuke in fellowship. ‘Rebuke’ is too sharp a word. We

miss a word that stands for speaking the truth in love. It is so hard to call attention to the faults of another, without seeming self-righteous, or at least ‘righteous over-much.’ Drawing attention to the failings of others has been so travestied by the harsh criticisms and scandals of unchristian minds, that we fail of our duty for very fear of falling into the errors of the world in that respect. The undertone of humility robs that duty of its danger. In honesty we tremble to point out the minor errors that spoil an otherwise Christian life, because we know that our frequent lack of humility will give substance to the suspicion that all the while we are obliquely pointing out our own virtues! In a real fellowship of humble souls, such a sacrament could often be carried out to the high advantage of every member. In such a case, it might even be done publicly in a fellowship meeting. With our own failing here, we find it impossible even in a secret place with the faulty brother. It is a harder observance than the Lord’s Supper; but dare we go on to share the bread and the wine unless we have first fulfilled the prelude of the feet-washing? Can we say that we are in love and charity with our neighbour when we cherish criticisms of things in his life which keep him from the fullness of the abundant life, while we withhold that purifying grace which we should bring to bear upon him?

There may be reminiscence in this act of our Lord of that time in the house of Simon the Pharisee, when the frail, loving woman washed His own feet with her tears. There was no ethical symbol of purifying there; it was the spontaneous outpouring of an overflowing love. So was His

washing of these twelve. Thus must be our fulfilling of that ‘ye ought also.’

I said, This task is keen—

But even while I spake, Thou, Love divine,

Didst stand behind and gently overlean

My drooping form, and oh, what task had been

Too stern for feebleness, with help of Thine?

Spell Thou this lesson with me, line by line,

The sense is rigid, but the voice is dear;

Guide Thou my hand within that hand of Thine,

Thy wounded hand, until its tremblings take

Strength from Thy touch, and even for Thy sake

Trace out each character in outline clear.

—Dora Greenwell.

## IN THE FELLOWSHIP

1. ‘Grace to receive such a service worthily.’ Why are we so rarely grateful to those who would cleanse us of some imperfections in our Christian life?
2. ‘It is my very humility that keeps me from helping my neighbour as this study suggests; I know myself too unworthy even to hint at faults in another.’ Should that deter us?
3. ‘The Gentleman of Nazareth.’ Find other qualities in the life of Jesus that make our usual term, ‘The Man of Nazareth,’ inadequate.



SECTION II  
'JUST AS JESUS DID'

- IV. 'The Quality of Mercy.'
- V. 'The Fellowship Symphony.'
- VI. 'Concerning the Collection.'
- VII. 'Viatores Amoris.'
- VIII. 'Emptied—of all but Love.'



## STUDY IV

### ‘THE QUALITY OF MERCY’

*We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself.—Rom. xv. 1-3.*

**D**R. MOULE suggests that there was perhaps in Rome a school of intellectuals who called themselves by the nickname of ‘The Capables,’ a proud school of liberty, in distinction from the rest, or it may have been from another school which had no power to make such pretensions, whom they knew as ‘The Unables.’ He thinks that the apostle is taking that local reference to refer to the difference between Christians and those in the surrounding world. Christians are the real ‘capables,’ not by virtue of any inherent qualities, but by reason of the strength wherewith Christ has made them strong. There is pity, not scorn, in the companion reference to the outsiders as being ‘weak.’ Those whom Christ has strengthened ought to use that strength not for their own delighting, but for the helping of those others; even as Christ, the supremely capable, used not His powers for Himself, but took upon Himself our infirmities.

There are different sources of strength available for human beings. (1) Physical strength, such as a



boy has in comparison with a fly; a hero over his defeated enemy; the man with a gun in relation to the elephant which has not. (2) The strength of mental ascendancy, which gives a doctor power over a subject under hypnotic influence, the man of personal magnetism over the weakling, the enthusiast over the mind that has never thought. (3) The power of position, which makes the judge in his court superior to the prisoner at the bar and all others under his jurisdiction; which makes the officer more influential at head quarters than the private soldier. (4) The strength of collective organization, the strength which is in unity, and empowers bodies of workmen or of their employers.

Only the strong can be merciful; the opportunity of mercy is one of the attributes of strength. Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount that mercy is also an adornment of strength. Indeed, that any one possessing strength stands in danger of losing it unless he be merciful.

The power of sparing a defeated rival, which is our common acceptance of the term, is not, however, the only meaning of mercy. The merciful man is he who champions the weak and pays due consideration to the rights of other people. To be pitiful to those who are put under our power is to attain the blessedness of those who are merciful, but that does not exhaust the meaning of the grace to which we are called. The really merciful man is he who refuses to use his strength for self-advantage, but lends his stronger shoulder on which to carry the burdens of his weaker brethren, 'even as Christ did.'

There is a charming little Irish legend which tells

of a hermit who lived in a cold cave on a mountain side, and was cheered by the song of a blackbird. When he discovered its nest in the ivy that covered the wall of his rock-cell, he blessed the nest and the bird. Then when the north wind blew, which brought the frost and sleet, he prayed from his own pillow of stone that God would have the bird in His gentle care; and knew his prayer was answered when his eyes were opened and he saw an angel with outstretched wings shelter the nest from the cold blast. On the next day, a woman and her baby asked the abbot for the shelter of his cave; and, thinking of how the angel of God had shown mercy to the blackbird, he opened the door and found that he had admitted the little Lord Jesus in the arms of His mother. That is the merciful man—he who does almost unnecessarily kind things with his strength; who might pass by those who are in trouble who have no claims upon his help, but who does not; who uses his resources for their advantage, his power against their oppressors. This is the merciful man, and he shall not fail of his reward, for Christ did so.

The way in which Jesus refused to live for the pleasing of Himself is one of the outstanding features of His life. He was endowed with powers which distinguished Him from all others, but He used these powers for clearly-defined ends—ends of disinterested considerateness. He would not work a miracle to appease His own hunger, but He would for the feeding of other people. He would not do His wonders to gain the plaudits of the crowd or to satisfy the morbid curiosity of a pagan potentate. But He would refrain from sleep, get up from sleep

and serve the needy until the virtue which went from Him left Him exhausted, yet even then ready at an urgent call to rise up and do another kindness. As a present-day preacher who has learned the way of Christ recently exclaimed: 'When I go home, I shall be ashamed—ashamed to meet Jesus, if I have a spark of energy left!' That was the way the Master went. He carried the sores of the lepers in His own heart; was blind and deaf and halt Himself in sympathy with the sufferers. He carried our griefs in His heart, and bore our infirmities in His own body. We refer sometimes to the 'unanswered prayer' of Gethsemane; but in stronger prominence is the great 'unasked prayer'—the prayer He would not pray for the ten legions of angels who might come to His deliverance. The reproaches of those who reproached God fell upon Him, and He refused the way of escape, He who was always providing ways of escape for His friends. If we can think of Jesus needing a motto for His life—that verbal crutch for limping souls—here it is: 'For their sakes.' He pleased not Himself.

We cannot copy His way of sorrow, but as we stand in the presence of this selfless love, comparison of our own lives with that becomes inevitable. Self-examination is possible at all times, but there are times when it becomes imperative. We occasionally make comparison of ourselves with ordinary people, but we needs must when we are before the extraordinary. The average man rarely gives a thought to his height, because he lives in a world of normal-sized folk; but let us meet a giant of six feet six, and inevitably we measure ourselves

against his inches. So let us stand in the company of One who kept the great law of selfless love, and at once, in spite of ourselves, we realize how much of self-pleasing there is in us. The fabric of our social life is built on selfishness. ‘Every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.’ Selfishness is the root of almost all our sin. We regard one another as tools, as means to our ends. Where the rights of others clash with our own advantage, we refuse to consider them. This selfishness brings ruined homes, strews our streets with unfortunates, wrecks the happiness of children, and leads to turmoil and catastrophe. Ever since man learned to fold his fingers into his palm, he has been grasping for himself; ever since he found he could clench his fist, he has been fighting for his ‘rights.’

This is the first reference of St. Paul in this long letter to the Romans to the example of Christ. He has discussed the Person of Christ, His atoning work, His resurrection power, and the great return. Now that these things are established in the minds of his people, a reverent study of Christ’s example is not only fitting but of urgent importance. In the five words, the whole ministry of Jesus is summed. The pictures of incidents in His life which they call up might fill the window spaces of a whole cathedral, and then leave some to spare; and every light in that stained-glass gallery would be a record of selfless love.

Strangely enough, many who honestly are prepared to suffer for their faith, are little prepared to suffer inconvenience for it. This is not a cheap cynicism; there are noble Christians who are willing to ‘go and die with Him,’ who are reluctant

to follow along the road that leads to 'no place where He may lay His head.' If they were bidden to do some great thing, everything that is heroic in them would respond; but where religion makes demands on personal fancies, they will not give up the pleasing of self. It is true that the big sacrifices mean the renouncing of self-interests too, but it is curiously easier, not only in promise but in fact, to make the big obedience, than to put minor delights in their fit subordinate place.

Most Christian workers have at some time made a great renunciation for the Master's cause; have given up pleasant prospects so as to undertake slightly paid posts of Christian service; have refused some gain which clashed with Christian principles; have entered unlovely places at home or abroad to take the Christian gospel. The romance maybe has sustained them, or they have been carried forward on the wave of a strong emotional experience. They are not proud of it, but humbly glad; they have done the big thing for Jesus. Yet such will admit, perhaps, that even with this in their record, they have found it impossible to give up rest or recreation so as to spend that time in a long interval of prayer; that small incompatible things, differences of temperament with other workers or the disappointment in some cherished plan, have robbed their ordinary work of half its heart. The spirit is willing to do the great task, and the flesh is often able, too; but both spirit and flesh are often weak when some seemingly smaller task demands the sacrifice of pleasurable moments.

It is a general classification among students now that every normal human mind has three directions

of instinct. In the jargon of psychology, these are known as the ‘primary’ instincts: the self-instinct, the sex-instinct, and the social instinct. There is believed to be in every mind also, a store of mind-energy, ‘psychic’ energy, which is at disposal for use among these instincts. The true adjustment of life is the adequate but not superfluous apportioning of mental power to each. Where too much attention is given to any one of the three, temptation to sin results. ‘Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.’ If St. James had been a member of a modern mind-school, he would have said the same thing by using such words as ‘when he gives an over-balance of psychic energy to any primary instinct’! His own way of putting it seems simpler; but present-day inquiry though employing more technical phrases, confirms his findings. ‘Let no man when he is tempted, say, “I am tempted of God.”’ For these primary instincts were given as boons and blessings to man; it is when he gives undue strength to one that the overpowering of that instinct leads to sin.

The reader must work out for himself how this applies in two of the cases; how the sex-instinct and the social instinct are beneficial to man, but become temptations through his unbridled use of them. It is with the self-instinct that we deal alone. The Rev. T. W. Pym<sup>1</sup> has made a clear statement of the case:

‘Sin in connexion with the stronger instinct of self may be dealt with under the headings of its two commonest expressions.

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology and the Christian Life*, by the Rev. T. W. Pym, M.A., chap. iv., on ‘The Psychology of Sin,’ passim.



'(1) There is the man (and he is perhaps the average man) who puts self, in peace time at any rate, before the claims of citizenship, largely conceived; yet he is anxious to render service to the community and to help forward the general welfare provided that his own economic conditions of life, his general habits, amusements, conventions, are not sacrificed. He would be prepared, on grounds that it is not easy to contest except by means of religion, to maintain that he was a good citizen, paid his taxes, subscribed to charities "according to his means," and led a respectable existence.

'(2) Then there is the man who puts self first "regardless." Convention may restrain him in certain directions, the law in others, but he acknowledges the claims of no one upon him, and regards his energy, money, and time as completely at his own disposal for his own selfish purposes. It is well to note that it is possible for even a sincerely religious person to indulge the self-instinct almost exclusively: the search for personal salvation to the exclusion of all else may be, though less obviously baneful to society, at any rate, just as "selfish." The difference, for instance, in moral value between devoting one's life to saving one's soul without thought of others, and devoting one's life to saving one's pocket and convenience has been not infrequently exaggerated. . . . Therefore sin by means of the self-instinct, i.e. "selfishness," may be variously defined. In effect it could be summed up as "The development of the self-instinct at the cost of the responsibilities attaching to the possession of other instincts, especially of the social-instinct," or "the



diversion of the energy proper to other instincts towards the attainment of selfish ends.”’

We have quoted this passage in full because it is written with the skill of a scientist and the insight of a prophet. Yet it only puts in modern speech what is the teaching of the Gospels and Epistles; and what has been the pure creed of the Christian Church. Any psychic energy superfluous to any one instinct may be transferred (‘sublimated,’ to use the twentieth-century term), to the purposes of another; and as Christians are called by Jesus to strengthen the social impulses, any power not needed for sex ends or self-purposes must be devoted to the service of society. There are possibilities of temptation even in the social-instinct, as any mob or public-house will prove; but the social instinct for all Christians is to be transfigured into earnest efforts for the redemption of society. The ‘self-instinct’ is a legitimate one; but by an imitator of Christ will be reduced to its very minimum; and all the mind-energy which others devote to self-interests, to comfort, leisure, amusements, personal advancement beyond the merely requisite, will by him be transferred to the helping of his fellows. A study of the example of Jesus soon shows how consistently that was His method. ‘He pleased not Himself’; i.e. ‘He developed not His self-instinct, but transferred all unneeded power in that respect to the salvation of society; He sanctified His social instinct, and gave every available spark of energy to the promotion of the social good.’ We ought also.

What a magnificent difference to the world would be made, if each person in the Christian Church

were to use the sources of power that we outlined at the start for purely personal ends no longer, but in the cause of mercy! If all the power of physique and appliance, of mental ascendancy, of position and of corporate combination above the barely necessary were to be applied to the service and well-being of society!

### IN THE FELLOWSHIP

1. Give any instances possible when power of any kind has been devoted to self instead of being sanctified, where the failure to use it mercifully for social ends has been followed by the loss of that power.
2. Enlarge, by illustrations, the suggestion that most of our sin is due to selfishness.
3. If to relegate self to insignificance in the interests of others, as Jesus did, were to result in individual acts like His, what would they be in modern life?

## STUDY V

### 'THE FELLOWSHIP SYMPHONY'

*Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*—Rom. xv. 7.

**S**T. PAUL had large outside interests, the enjoyment of which added to the pure joy of his Christian faith. Curiously, country life does not seem to have been one of them. God's great out-of-doors does not seem to have had the fascination for him that it had for his Lord. He very rarely uses nature illustrations, and when he does, he sometimes makes mistakes in handling them! He was a town-man, and his delights were rather those of city culture than the simpler ones of the fields and open road. There is music, for instance. His heart was full of Christ, and longed its glorious matter to declare; of Him he made his loftier songs; he could not from His praise forbear! The 'melody' in the heart that burst into songs in the prison at Philippi is a running accompaniment in all his teaching. He quotes often from the Psalms, and other great chorales of the Old Testament; and some obvious quotations not definitely located are probably extracts from the hymns and spiritual songs of the early Church. To mass together a few references to prove this interest,

there are the 'loud-sounding trumpet' and the 'clanging cymbal' of 1 Cor. xiii.; the 'flutes' and 'harps' and 'bugles' of the following chapter; the sounding of 'the last trumpet' in the next chapter still; the exhortation to sing, in Eph. v., and in Col. iii.

Dr. Moffatt has translated the context in this passage from Romans in a way that brings out well the musical allusion. 'May the God who inspires steadfastness and encouragement grant you such harmony with one another, after Christ Jesus, that you may unite in a chorus of praise and glory to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Welcome one another, then, as Christ has welcomed yourselves, for the glory of God.' The great cantata of heaven will be incomplete if there be missing the symphony of fellowship from earth.

All of which means that the voices of the Gentiles must not be missing from the praise that rises to God. He quotes from the Psalms twice; from Deuteronomy (calling the author of his quotation a 'psalmist'), and from Isaiah, to prove that the Gentiles, too, are to sing songs of honour to God, to be glad in the Lord, to rejoice and extol the Lord, and build their hopes upon Him. Since they also are called to the love of God, they must have their part in the Christian choir; else God will hear imperfect strains from earth, in

. . . that great home of harmony sublime,  
Where heaven's grand organ-tones for ever roll,  
And Love in music thrills from soul to soul;  
Where earth's harsh discords melt in cadence sweet,  
And heaven's great choir the glorious notes repeat.  
Till, massed in blended grandeur, perfect grown,

They roll along in mighty unison,  
The broken songs of earth, in full divine accord  
Made one by the eternal, changeless Lord.

—Colin Sterne.

It was a never-ceasing marvel to the apostle that Christ had called the Gentiles to share with God's ‘chosen people’ the privilege of sonship, and on the same terms as the Jews; without even having to pass through the gate of the proselyte. In the old, proud days, he would have demanded that any such must profess conversion to the Jewish faith and in addition be naturalized as a Jewish citizen, before he might indulge the least advantage of the ancient race. It took him longer to learn the lesson even than St. Peter, who had been taught that no creature of God was common or unclean; but St. Paul came back from his retreat in Arabia with his lesson well learned, and he never after doubted God's purpose for the ‘heathen,’ or wavered in his proclamation of it. He called it ‘his’ gospel, and declared himself to be ‘the apostle to the Gentiles.’ The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—to use his favourite name for God—had chosen the most unlikely people on whom to bestow His gifts, and He had selected the most unlikely messenger by whom to make it known. It took some doing at first; but when he remembered the marvel of the fact that Christ had welcomed him, ‘the chief of sinners,’ who was ‘not meet to be called an apostle’ because he had ‘persecuted the Church,’ it became a minor wonder that God should welcome and bid him welcome the previously unprivileged into a fellowship that had no reserves. Some of the others had misgivings at times, and would make reserva-

tions, but St. Paul would have none of it. His Lord had welcomed him without conditions; and just as Christ had done for him, must he now do for them.

The first essential to real Christian fellowship and service seems to be a re-capturing of the sense of wonder that came to us when Christ welcomed us. This constant amazement has been strong in those souls that have been full of spiritual vigour; and in those days, when the Church has been most faithful and effective. There seems a necessary connexion between a marvel at the greatheartedness of God and true Christian work. Read St. Paul again: 'Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!' Is there not blank, utter wonder in that? 'God commendeth His love to us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly!' It is impossible to read that sentence sympathetically without the voice rising in a crescendo of surprise. It was this constantly staggering thought that he had been welcomed in his sins by Christ that made the apostle such a mighty worker for God, and a missionary in dark places.

Read the great hymns of the Church, and notice that those written by the most honoured toilers in the cause are pervaded by this amazement; notice too that the days in which the Church was most successful in her ministry were those in which the hymns were published which express the mightiest wonder.

And can it be, that *I* should gain  
An interest in the Saviour's blood?  
Died He for *me*, who caused His pain?



For *me*, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for *ME*?

Half a hundred of the hymns that have come down to us from the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century echo this note:

Depth of mercy! can there be  
Mercy still reserved for me?  
Can my God His wrath forbear?  
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?

If it is true that we have lost to a great extent this attitude, may it not be that this loss not only corresponds in point of time with our present ineffectiveness of life and service, but is actually the cause of it?

Theodore Watts-Dunton, in his essay on ‘The Renaissance of Wonder,’ dwells upon the two impulses in the human mind; the impulse which takes unchallenged and for granted all the phenomena of the outer world, and the impulse which confronts them with eyes of inquiry and wonder. ‘No great work of art,’ he says, ‘is possible that does not come from a sense of amazement.’ Such is the dictum of a great art critic; and the Christian, searching in his heart for the reason why his labour seems in vain, and why the Church is not doing in a land of many opportunities the work that challenges it on every side, knows that God is pointing out from the pages of His book and from the pages of secular history, that no great work for Him can be done by men who take unchallenged and for granted the things that He has done for them. Perhaps the reason why we find it so difficult to associate in fellowship with some of our



fellow Christians, and why we can gain no enthusiasm for certain types of Christian service among the sinners whom in our pride we put upon a lower level than ourselves, is that we feel that after all we, rather than they, are quite fit and proper persons to be saved and welcomed by Christ. Let us in our self-examination win back the awed admiration at the grandeur of the love of Christ in welcoming such folk as in our heart of hearts we know ourselves to be. We must face the fact of our own conversion, as St. Paul did, with eyes of inquiry and wonder. The blatancy of our own trumpets so often drowns in our ears the sighs and moans of our brothers for whom Christ also died. Let us still our self-praise in marvel at the grace of God, and we may hear the cry of those whom we may help. Then, turning their sighs into singing, we may make heaven's melody complete.

If we have admitted that some at least of the defect in our life and service may be due to our not having the knowledge of our unworthiness which would bring a wonder at the mighty love of God for us, we shall next ask, if we are honest, how that proper knowledge of ourselves may come. Notice that we are not simply asking how we may be brought to marvel at the love of God for others, but at that love for us. It may be readily agreed that God loves the Hottentot and the debauchee in a city slum. He has Himself declared it, and it is just like Him. It is wonderful, of course, and we are suitably surprised. Yet that acknowledgement may merely lead us to add without wonderment: 'Then, if God loves such, He must of necessity love me.' In mercy, God stooped to save the poor and

the outcasts; but the really humble man who knows his own sinful heart will ask with no false humility if even that is a guarantee that He can love the scornful and nonchalant. The consciously orthodox soul is indeed the hardest to save! So far from it being obvious that if God loves *them* He must love *me*, as the greater involves the less, the argument rather is that the ignorant and those sinned against by society have a larger claim upon His mercy than those who with so many advantages have deliberately put off the day of their decision. That those who sin against the light are on a lower level than those who sin in the dark! He will enter the heart of the pagan and the prostitute.

Canst Thou stoop again, still lower,  
And abide within *my* heart?

He can and does, but we shall never gain at all a wonder at His so great love until we can translate it into very personal terms.

The knowledge of sin is the product of a high spiritual experience. When one who has lived in the dregs of society enters a mission hall, and is led to unwonted thoughts by the brightness of the hymns or the memories at last revived of evenings spent at some mother's knee, so that he knows himself a sinner in God's sight, it may be a very sudden and perhaps emotional but for him it is a high spiritual experience. As he grows in sainthood, this knowledge of sin so far from weakening, deepens. The nearer to God, the higher his partaking of spiritual privileges, so much the more his awareness of evil in his life. Those who would serve God best are ‘conscious most of wrong

within.' To be unaware, therefore, of much that is wrong with us, so that we are not surprised that God could find it in His heart to save us, is a self-admission that we are living on a low spiritual plane. If, starting now from this discovery, one should seek to find why it is that he is so evidently not living to the spiritual attainments possible to him, he will find in how many respects he is not keeping the perfect law of God. To his surprise, he will find himself a greater sinner than he thought himself, and will begin to wonder now not that God could plan a way of salvation for the pariah, but that He could love one who in so many respects tried to thwart His purposes. By some such means we must win through to a mind that marvels at the love that could welcome us.

Arrived there, it will be seen to be our bounden duty to follow Christ in this respect; to welcome others 'just as' Christ has welcomed us. To stint no love, however worthless they may seem at first. God has chosen unlikely people as the objects of His love (among whom we have now come to number ourselves), and He has selected unlikely folk (even ourselves), by whom to send the message of that love to them.

Study in the Gospels the people whom Jesus loved to meet. He had a large corner in His heart for the business man, as witness His parables: the merchant with his jewel store, the fisher sorting out his catch, the shrewd house-steward, the successful agriculturalist, the builder with sane methods, the wise investor. Soldiers had an especial attractiveness to Him, and He welcomed the mourners with peculiar tenderness. Children, of course. But

sinner above all. He was very wide in the range of His friendships: the evil and the innocent, the simple and the shrewd. Outside Galilee, too, He received the foreigner. Strangest of all, the Samaritans!

We ought to be as varied in the choice of our fellowship as He; loving those who are loving, loving the unloving, loving the unlovable, loving the unloved. It is easy as a rule to respond to love with love—but ‘your enemies’! Maybe you cannot forgive them till they repent, but you must love them all the while. The ‘goodness’ of your love may lead them to repentance, even as did the love of God for you. Giovanni Papini examines the story of the Good Samaritan, and observes: ‘Our neighbour, then, is he who suffers, who stands in need of our ministrations, no matter who he be. Even our enemy, if he need our help, though he ask it not, is the nearest of our neighbours.’<sup>1</sup> How gracious a ministry do those Christians exert who seek out for their fellowship those whom the love of the world has passed by; who visit the sick and tend the needy, who are like their Lord ‘inasmuch’ as they do so. The unlovables are the hardest of all to welcome, yet such were those whom Jesus cared for above all! That, to quote Papini again, was because He had none of the limitations of the convert. The convert ‘has paid so dearly for his salvation, borne so much, and suffered so acutely, it seems to him a treasure at once so precious and so fragile that he lives in perpetual dread of exposing it to danger, of losing it. He does not avoid sinners, but approaches them with an instinctive

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of Christ*, by Giovanni Papini.

sense of repugnance; with the fear, frequently unrecognized even by himself, of a fresh contagion; with terror, lest the sight of the impurity in which he himself once delighted may awaken in him an intolerable sense of his own shame and imperil his salvation. The servant who becomes a master is never at ease with his servants; he who has been poor, on growing rich is seldom generous with the poor; after his conversion, he who was once a sinner is not always indulgent to sinners.' Many of those whom we count among the 'unlovables' are living also in other lands under other religious faiths in imperfect civilizations. But the very word 'unlovable' ought to be ruled out of the Christian's vocabulary. They for us are the 'Gentiles' whom we should receive as Christ also received us.

Study, too, the charm of the welcome Christ gave to those who came to Him. He who was always so busy was never too busy to be interrupted. The test of the warmth of a welcome is made when the visitor surprises us at a moment when we would rather not be disturbed at our task. It is hard to be gracious, then. We should learn how to receive winsomely even in circumstances like that, to act as Jesus would in a busy office on a rushed day when one whom we would call an 'unwelcome' visitor arrived! Then translate that same charm into all our dealings with others. If this were characteristic of all Christians, many more would want to become Christian from sheer admiration of such a temperament, even as we want to be like Jesus because He charms us so.

IN THE FELLOWSHIP

1. Collect some hymns in which the note of amazement is marked.
2. As a matter of experience, does ‘the sense of sin’ deepen with ‘growth in grace’?
3. A little girl prayed, ‘Lord make the bad people good, and the good people nice.’ Was she praying for you?

## STUDY VI

### 'CONCERNING THE COLLECTION'

*Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich. And herein I give my advice; for this is expedient for you.—2 Cor. viii. 9, 10.*

IT is refreshing to Christians, much of whose Christian service in the Church is concerned with appeals for money with which to carry on the work of God, to find that St. Paul deals several times with this problem of the collection. Financial questions are generally a matter of delicacy in the Church, and the sane, strong method of the apostle in this respect is at once an encouragement and an inspiration. He lifts the problem out of the sordid, and there is never any fear that he will frighten away some lightly attached folk by having dared to mention the matter of money. He deals with the collection on the highest plane, and appeals at once to the very example of Jesus. It is sometimes whimsically pointed out that he concludes the great resurrection sermon in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, with words that are almost an equivalent to the modern phrase, 'The collection will now be taken'! Break away the artificial barrier between the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, and the words run consecutively: 'Ye



know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. Now, concerning the collection for the saints.’ In this second epistle, he deals still with the matter of giving, and finds nothing incongruous in inserting a request for monetary gifts in the very heart of profound spiritual teaching.

These contributions which St. Paul raised among his Gentile converts were to be sent as love-tokens to the suffering Church at Jerusalem. If anything could bind the Jewish and Gentile converts together in sympathy, it would surely be the giving and receiving of such a cheerfully rendered offertory. Olshausen makes two suggestions as to the need for such gifts. The practice of having all things in common which was instituted soon after Pentecost was perhaps the cause of the Church in Jerusalem becoming impoverished; although that passage in the Acts may not mean that a community of goods, in the sense of providing a living for all the members of the Church out of funds common to all was established. ‘It would therefore be only some individuals, acting from an excess of zeal upon the first impulse of brotherly love, who would be so destitute.’ This, he thinks, however, would not be sufficient to explain St. Paul’s collections. ‘It is possible that the apostle desired to express his piety towards the mother church, and the acknowledgement of his dependence. As all Jews down to modern times paid half a shekel to the Temple at Jerusalem, and after its destruction continued the contribution in order to meet the necessities of the Jews living there, Paul probably considered himself bound to express his gratitude to the mother-church by a similar

collection in her behalf. . . . These collections may be considered the acknowledgement of the connexion with the mother-church. And besides, as the apostle's rules brought him into a species of conflict with the Jewish Christians, the apostle might the more zealously urge these contributions in order to signify by deeds his personal inclination towards the mother-church.'<sup>1</sup> There can be no certainty for his motives, though these suggestions are interesting; but what is certain is that there was an urgent need for help on the part of the Christians in the mother-city.

We find the converts in Antioch on the arrival of certain 'prophets from Jerusalem,' determining to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea; 'which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.' In his defence before Felix, St. Paul explains his presence in Jerusalem: 'I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.' Writing to the Romans, he refers to the generosity of those who lived in Macedonia and Achaia, who had made certain contribution 'for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in carnal things.' This last sentence indeed gives point to Olshausen's second suggestion considered above. The open-handedness of Macedonia is more than once in the apostle's mind.

In further reference to the need at Jerusalem, Dr. Marcus Dods suggests that the Christians there were impoverished by persecution, a perse-

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on the Corinthian Epistles*, Olshausen.

cution which the apostle could not fail to remember he had himself promoted! ‘Many Christians were driven from their homes, and many more must have lost their means of livelihood.’<sup>1</sup> He adds that St. Paul was anxious to relieve this poverty, not so much, however, because it had been partly caused by himself as because he saw in it an opportunity for bringing more closely together the two great parties (Jew and Gentile) in the Church. He recalls that in the letter to the Galatians, St. Paul tells us that the three leaders of the Jewish Christian Church, when they had assured themselves that this new apostle was trustworthy, gave him the right hand of fellowship on the understanding that he should minister to the Gentiles, ‘only they would that we should remember the poor,’ evidently the poor of the Jewish Church, ‘which,’ he adds, ‘I also was forward to do.’

Macedonia had done splendidly in the matter, but St. Paul had evidently boasted that those at Corinth would be no whit behind in their gifts. The Macedonian Christians had given according to their power, ‘yea, and beyond their power,’ giving themselves first in loving sympathy and then their gifts, ‘of their own accord, beseeching us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints.’ Now he asks the Corinthian Church to make good his boasting on their behalf, ‘lest by any means if there come with me any of Macedonia, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not ye!) should be put to shame in this confidence.’ There had been slanderous persons who urged that he had been feathering

<sup>1</sup> ‘The First Epistle to the Corinthians,’ *Expositor's Bible*.

his own nest by these gifts, but he waives this evil rumour aside with a gesture that is at once dignified and satisfying. Will each Christian at Corinth, therefore, 'upon the first day of the week . . . lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him?' Then, by the time he has reached them they will have gathered a gift worthy for him to send to their afflicted brethren, and there will be no need for any 'gatherings' to take place during his ministry of the Word. It is all so healthy as an appeal for money, that it lifts the reader out of the chilled and depressing atmosphere of so much church begging, and refreshes him as a perfect example of how money should be asked for from a Christian congregation. He refers to such generosity as a 'grace,' one of the virtues of Christian character.

The line of appeal is threefold. There is the example of Macedonia; there is the abundant reward of joy that comes to the liberal person; but chief is his suggestion that such generosity is a copying of Christ who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. It is a daring and tremendous illustration to use the fact of the Incarnation as a collection appeal. That Christ should give up heaven in sympathy with suffering men, he calls the 'grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,' and it is to the imitation of this 'grace' that he invites his readers. He closes the appeal passage in the last verse of our ninth chapter with the words: 'Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.' The Father is implied in the generosity of the Son—He 'gave' His only-begotten.

The grace of giving up for the sake of others—

have we learned it? ‘To give and not to count the cost’—like Christ. ‘Not grudgingly or of necessity,’ but with cheerful giving like His. Miss Havergal’s hymn suggests the distance between His rich estate and the poverty of His earth-condition.

Thy Father’s home of light,  
Thy rainbow-circled throne,  
Were left for earthly night,  
For wanderings sad and lone.

We may not feel able to give on that majestic scale, but the comparison is insistent,

Yea, all was left for me;  
Have I left *ought* for Thee?

By that life given for men, that shed blood, by those long years of weariness and woe, by the bearing of bitterest agony more than tongue can tell,

Great gifts Thou broughtest me.

The least adequate response to such generosity is:

I give myself to Thee.

The Christians in Macedonia, understanding this ‘grace’ of giving in their Lord, first ‘gave their own selves.’ It was their reasonable service. If we abound in many things: in ‘faith,’ so as to remove mountains; in ‘utterance,’ having the tongue of men and of angels; in ‘knowledge,’ so as to understand all mysteries; in ‘diligence,’ as we are fervent in spirit; and in ‘love,’ for the Church, let us see that we ‘abound in this grace also.’ Let us give of sympathy and help as Jesus did, not ‘out’ of His riches, as some misquote; nor even ‘according to’ His riches, for that is still an imperfect description of the Incarnation; let us give our very selves, as He gave.

In the ninth chapter of Romans we see the naked soul of a great man, and it is a terrible sight. St. Paul did not wear his heart upon his sleeve; like most great men, his inner life was mostly hidden behind closed doors. He had a secret citadel; his life was hid with Christ, and he did not often expose his deepest aspirations to the common gaze. Once at any rate he did. It is February in the year A.D. 58, and he is sitting in a room at Corinth which belongs to a wealthy friend, a Christian. The apostle is speaking slowly, sometimes walking about the room, sometimes sitting with a distant look. He is dictating this letter to the Romans. Near him is sitting at a little table a youth named Tertius, who is writing at his master's dictation. Hour after hour passes as the tender messages and great truths are spoken and copied down. He tells of his conversion, of the sins of the world in which he had shared, of the struggles of his soul when he tried to live well, and of the punishment that is the due reward of sin. He tells the stupendous love of Christ. Then the eager voice stops and for a while there is silence—an awful silence like that of a strong man undergoing an agony that he will not tell. Presently the writer looks up, and St. Paul speaks: 'Tertius, I am in terrible pain.' The startled youth half rises; 'In pain, master? . . .' 'In trouble, lad; why will not my people, my own people, love my Lord?' There is the soul that feels the burdens of other folks' sins, and suffers because of them.

Before his mind there passes a host of those he knows and loves, careless, frivolous, jolly, but one and all refusing the greatest and gladdest chance



ever offered to them. What would be the end of all their sin? ‘The end of these things is death—death under the anger of God!’ Yet Christ had died that all the most glorious things that they were missing now might be theirs. Died—so that they might live; might really live on earth and live for ever after death. Why would they not accept His love; why would they resolve to die?

Why, ye thankless creatures, why  
Will you cross His love, and die?  
Why, ye ransomed sinners, why  
Will you slight His grace, and die?  
Why, ye long-sought sinners, why  
Will you grieve your God, and die?  
What could your Redeemer do  
More than He hath done for you?  
Could He more than shed His blood?  
After all His waste of love,  
All His drawings from above,  
Why will you your Lord deny?  
Why will you resolve to die?

And St. Paul, in that silent room, is facing the question—‘Why will not my people love my Lord?’

Presently he goes on again: ‘What can I do to help them to love Him?’ He had done much already. Read the list in 2 Cor. xi., and other places. Yet he cries, ‘It is not enough; what can I do?’ Then there comes to his mind the story of Moses, who long ago, when praying to God to forgive his people, said, ‘Blot my name out from the Book of Life’; and in his agony he cries himself, ‘Oh, if it would help, I would go down to suffer for ever in hell, if it would lead my people to love my Lord.’ . . . ‘Tertius, take up your pen again



and write: "I am telling the truth in Christ; it is no lie! My conscience bears me out in the Holy Spirit when I say that I am in sore pain. I suffer endless anguish of heart; I could wish myself anathema—cursed and banished, cut off from Christ and sent to hell instead—for the sake of my brothers." That is a passion of love. There is the awful dream of an uttermost sacrifice. It would not be required of him, but the passion of that willingness would be for ever now the measure of his gifts.

There is the secret of St. Paul's success as a Christian worker, and it is necessary for all successful service in the name of Christ. He was pained just as Christ was pained by the sin of the world, and was willing to suffer as much as Christ did, who 'descended into hell' to save men from it. What a difference it would make to our service for humanity, if we were only willing to go to any lengths, to any depths—even the depths of hell—to save men from their sins and lead them to Christ! That is the ultimate test.

Israel Zangwill tells the story of two little girls. They were sisters, and the older one had read in the Book of the Revelation something about there being 144,000 people in heaven. She took the passage at its face value, and prayed by her cot that night: 'O Lord Jesus, I did not know that You had only room for 144,000, and I am afraid by now You cannot have many more places left. If you have not room for two from one family, please take Margery—she's littler than I am—and really, I don't mind hell so very much.' Dear little kiddie! Isn't that lovely? Isn't that LOVE? Do we honestly

care as much for the salvation of our fellows that we are willing to say and mean things like that?

The only difference in essentials between St. Paul and his Lord was that the apostle was willing to do what Jesus was allowed to do, and actually did. St. Paul's love was almost as great as his Lord's. If it would save men from sin, he was willing to be made a curse. Jesus was made a curse—for ‘cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree’—because that would save men from sin.

When we are willing to ‘give ourselves’ like Jesus did—like that—we shall have learned a generosity that will stand comparison with the generosity of the Incarnation. We shall not haggle over monetary gifts or gifts of time and thought and toil.

## IN THE FELLOWSHIP

1. What would be St. Paul's attitude to modern methods of raising money for Church purposes?
2. ‘The grace of liberality.’ Is generosity ever accounted a virtue outside of Christian influences? Is not every generous person somehow touched with a Christ-like sympathy?
3. If willingness to suffer ourselves is a token of ‘giving ourselves,’ in what ways is that shown in present times?

## STUDY VII

### ‘VIATORES AMORIS’

*Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.*—Eph. v. 2.

**D**R. FINDLAY once very cleverly abbreviated an old Latin tag. ‘Solvitur ambulando,’ we say sometimes when we are faced by a problem which is solved by no test which we can apply to it. ‘Leave it alone,’ we add; ‘in the natural working out of things it will resolve itself.’ While we are ‘walking about’ engaged in other and quite ordinary things, some hidden process of the mind will continue its application, and presently we shall discover our difficulty simplified and satisfied. It will have solved itself while we disregarded it. Dr. Findlay, writing of the intellectual problems of faith, with an act of genius cut out a syllable from this phrase—‘Solvitur amando’ he substituted, changing the word for ‘walking about’ into the verb of ‘love.’ The problems of faith become easier of solution not so much by leaving them to the automatic action of the sub-conscious as by a conscious act of love. ‘He who is willing to do the will,’ says Jesus, ‘shall understand the teaching.’ To the loving saint is given a measure of know-

ledge which supersedes many things which to others are necessarily matters only of faith. We over-emphasize, perhaps, the statement that we walk by faith and not by sight. The imitator of Christ has possibilities of knowledge, similarly to Jesus. ‘We have but faith; we cannot know’ is not the plaint of the sons of God. It is not only the man who has no faith who is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed; it is also the man who has faith only. But to those who love is given the right to *know*—a level of life higher than mere believing. They walk upright, as those who see Him who is invisible, and not fearfully as the blind who grope for the wall. They have serenity of life because they have certainties; indeed, it is only in the less important things of the Christian life that the lover of God needs to exercise faith. He believes in the method of the Atonement; but he knows that Christ has saved him from his sins. He believes in the doctrine of the Trinity; but he knows that he has a Father who gives him life and loves him, a Saviour who is his daily companion, a Holy Spirit who helps him to make a true confession and a bold resistance to evil. He believes in certain details of the Hereafter, that the imperfections of this world will there be put right, that he will there enjoy eternally the things that have given him the purest delights in his earthly life, and that he will be able to understand and appreciate the absolute values of the things which here he could only comprehend when they were translated for him into concrete forms; but he knows that the love of God for him and his love for God is too divine a thing ever to be

allowed to be interrupted by so grossly material a thing as death, and that there was too much of the divine in the human loves permitted him ever to doubt of a day of reunion. He may be as sure of these things as Jesus was. His certainties in all the most important things of Christian living transcend mere faith. The problems of the erstwhile questioner are solved by love.

If this is true of matters of intellect, it is dominantly true in social life. There is no problem of diplomacy so intricate, no question of national well-being so involved, but it can be made easy of solution to the statesmanship which love bestows. 'It's just the art of being kind that all this poor world needs.' And St. Paul combines the 'ambulando' and 'amando.' 'Walk about in love,' he says, just like Jesus did. Christ has solved for us the problems of life and the life to come by loving us; by loving us to the extent of offering Himself as a sacrifice to God for us. Let the Ephesians, and let us, solve the problems that come even in a society of believers from the clash of temperaments and all the other problems of every form of communal life by imitating Him—by love that loves to the point of suffering. We must be wayfarers of love—'viatores amoris.'

'Love' is one of the most abused words in the dictionary. It is used to describe mere fancies on the one hand (as when folk say they 'love' ice cream, fine weather, and such things); and on the other it is used unblushingly to indicate quite frankly animal passions. The Christian who would discipline himself in speech should begin here, and refuse to use so sacred a word in any but its right

and divine connexions. It may seem pedantic to avoid the use of the word ‘love’ in sentences where it does not rightly apply, in favour of one that more strictly fits the case; but it is better to earn the name of a pedant than to debase so noble a word to the base uses of ordinary speech. There is something of the divine in every true love. That is the test to be applied. Passion takes; love gives. To ‘walk in love’ is to offer oneself. We could not understand the phrase ‘God so loved’ except the text went on to add ‘that He gave.’

What was their sweet desire and subtle yearning,  
Lovers and ladies whom their song enrols?  
Faint to the flame which in my breast is burning,  
Less than the love with which I ache for souls.

St. Paul, in these words of F. W. H. Myers, tells how he had won the hearts ‘of sister or of brother,’ how

. . . every heart awaiteth me, another  
Friend in the blameless family of God.

He had won from them this true love in return because he would

Never at even, pillowed on a pleasure,  
Sleep with the wings of aspiration furled,  
Hide the last mite of the forbidden treasure,  
Keep for (his) joys a world within the world.

Instead of this,

. . . much rather let me late returning,  
Bruised of my brethren, wounded from within,  
Stoop with sad countenance and blushes burning,  
Bitter with weariness and sick with sin.

He won their true love because He gave a true love. He ‘offered Himself’ as a sacrifice to God for them; just like Jesus did!

Sir Henry Lunn, in a little brochure called *The*



*Discipline of Love*, observes that 'the love which responds to Infinite Love, our love of Jesus, is unworthy of its object if it does not suffice to compel us to all the discipline that is necessary to fit us for His service.' 'Let him take up the cross and follow Me' is what Infinite Love demands of mortal love; love is not love until it turns with bedewed eyes from the cross of Christ and lays trembling fingers upon its own.

Friction came very early into the Christian Church. No later than in the sixth chapter of the book of the Acts, there is a 'murmuring' of the Gentile Christians against the Jewish. It was a somewhat sordid squabble; the Gentiles may have had some reason to complain that their widows were neglected in the daily ministration of alms; but there could have been no offence caused or grievance taken had the spirit of the love of Christ possessed each party. Even among themselves the apostles had troubles—on matters of principle, of course; but in their disputes they seem at times to have forgotten the easier solution of the way of love. Several times St. Paul has to bid his converts sink their differences if they would be worthy of the love of Christ.

When we come to sub-apostolic history there are darker pages. In Neander's *Church History* we have not come to the end of section two before there is grouped the 'history of Church divisions and schisms.' First there is the persecution of Christians; then, the stories of expulsion from the society of believers of those who were evil doers or dangerous heretics, with the terms of readmission. But immediately come the divisions which



are distinguished from the expulsions chiefly by the amount of unchristian heat which they engendered. It was necessary to maintain discipline, but this could be done in love. Again and again we see how often it happened that instead of vying with each other in the discharge of their duties in the spirit of love and self-denial, passion and self-will made both parties look upon wrong as right. Men who see red cannot see objects in their true perspective. The quiet of heart that love brings would have prevented many of the splits in the Church that were simply due to misviewing by agitated minds. Pride of place and ambitions for episcopal positions were responsible for many of these early Church quarrels. But there is no pride in love; nor any love in pride. Severity with offenders which went beyond loving discipline was another cause of strife; yet once more strife came through the absence of Christlike love.

The sin against which our Lord was constantly speaking was that of hard-heartedness, which is the antithesis of love. His heart melted always with tenderness because He loved without ceasing. To sinners He was unfailingly gentle; and even in His references to the hard-hearted themselves—the worst of sinners—there is often a sorrowful and wooing note. To imitate Him in this will be to advance the Kingdom with astounding success, and will prevent the ills that lack of fellowship engenders.

Those hard-hearted folk who so obviously missed His spirit were those who committed the twin sins of being unfeeling and unforgiving. The unfeeling man breaks the law of sympathy; the unforgiving

that of mercy. Both are laws of love. The two types are represented by the Prussian and the Sicilian. The 'Prussian' is the man who crushes rushlessly under foot those weaker than himself, who pursues his own devices selfishly, regardless of the reasonable rights of others, who ministers to his pleasure and respectability while the cry of the world's sorrow never pierces through his oaken door. The 'Sicilian' is the man who nurses the vendetta and lets a quarrel smoulder. Both are types of hard-heartedness, and for both Jesus has nothing but condemnation. He warns the unforgiving man that God will be unforgiving to him; He warns the unfeeling man that God will cease to reveal Himself as feeling to him.

But it is not so much the penalties these men incur that Jesus felt, as the awfulness of being guilty of such offences. It seemed impossible that such offences should not come, but it was woe to the men through whom they came. 'How can they do it?' was ever in His thought. To be faithful to His message He had to point out the dire and inevitable consequences of their conduct, but He was more anxious to implant in men a loathing of such things than He was to frighten them out of it by warnings and threats. He wanted to stab their spirits broad awake to the heinousness of their crimes. So He spoke many words about hard-heartedness and the lack of love so that men might hate and not simply fear to be guilty of it.

He spoke of the sin of the unfeeling heart. Here is a man who sees a boy trying to grow up pure and noble, who puts every possible hindrance

in that lad's way and causes him to stumble. It was a sin such that, rather than be responsible for it, a man might prefer never to have been born. It would be better for him (mark, better for *him*; not just for the Kingdom of God, and not even for the sake of that 'little one') that he should have a stone chained round his neck and that he be drowned like a dog, launched into the presence of God with all his past sins unforgiven, than that he should be guilty of this last and worst, the blackest sin in God's catalogue. Then here is another who never fed the starving, who refused a cup of water to the thirsty, who would not entertain strangers with sympathetic kindness, who did not clothe the naked or tend the sick or befriend the fallen; a very vivid picture of the unfeeling. Because they were unfeeling to these needy folk, God—Jesus says—will take it as a personal affront to Himself. Whilst He spoke of the punishment that must be measured out to such, He was thinking most of the deplorable state of mind of the man who could be unfeeling like that.

Unfeeling minds are much the same as those indicated by Jesus. Human nature has not changed much since His day. It is clothed differently, and has assumed a more refined accent. Our hardness of heart in refusing to reverence the innocent is not so commonly that of placing sin callously near the young in our own person. Yet we permit without protest in our community conditions where children are handicapped from the very start, so that they grow up without the perfect physical health which is their normal privilege; and we permit them to be surrounded by temptations

which make it almost impossible for them to grow up pure in thought and character. An individual stands guilty in the sight of God in respect of all these things if he complacently permits the presence of them. He can only deliver his soul from the burden of them by energetic efforts to remove them.

In the same way, we still sin against the law of sympathy in respect to the distressed. If the Good Samaritan had given sympathy to the man on the high road as the world counts 'sympathy,' he would not have gained the applause of Jesus. We may be very sorry for the afflicted—perhaps the priest and Levite were—and yet our 'sympathy' may be very cheap and valueless. The way of love is not that of cheap condolences and still cheaper promises to 'pray for you,' but that of an offering up of self in true, active sympathy. 'Suffering together with.'

The 'Sicilian' type, the unforgiving heart, is shown in the parable of the Unmerciful Servant—a story made all the more vivid by its whimsical touches of exaggeration. The man who has a debt of two or three million pounds wiped off is merciless to a debtor who owes him  $8\frac{1}{2}d$ . We have been forgiven our sins; we sing about it joyously in our hymns, and declare how great a love God has for us, and then we will not forgive others their paltry little offences. The floors of our Churches are strewn with the dead bones of unforgotten quarrels. Things are not the same as they used to be between one church member and another because of a petty dispute coming down from ages ago. One will not speak to another or renew happy associations be-

cause of what happened years since. Jesus simply could not understand that state of mind. He condemned it as hardness of heart, and that is about the right word for it. ‘If thy brother sin against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.’ But even if he is unrepentant, love him! Love does not pass over offences with easy good nature. Love feels the sting of wrongs done against itself. Love itself cannot forgive until there is repentance, but it does not keep an account-book of wrongs done. ‘Taketh no account of evil!’ Love does not say it will forgive but cannot forget. That it will forgive, but things cannot be the same afterwards. For that is not forgiveness. Yet even where there is no repentance, there is still room for love.

To keep the laws of sympathy and mercy is to walk in the way of love, as Jesus did. It is to avoid the sin of hard-heartedness, which came as near the unforgivable sin as any Jesus knew. Love like this will make impossible church friction, and will solve as nothing else can the problems of our social, industrial, and international life.

### IN THE FELLOWSHIP

1. Is it true that there is only need for ‘faith’ in those matters of Christian living which are least important; that in all the vital things the Christian who loves may *know*?
2. What would the Good Samaritan have said to the robbed man, if he were only willing to give what the worldly man calls sympathy?
3. How would a love like Christ’s on a general scale solve: (a) a factory dispute; (b) an international misunderstanding; (c) any typical case of friction in the Church?

## STUDY VIII

### 'EMPTIED . . . OF ALL BUT LOVE'

*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.—Phil. ii. 5-8.*

REVERENT minds must want to read these verses in a whisper. St. Paul himself understands that he is on holy ground. The distance between the 'form of God' and the 'form of a servant' is the measure of the Incarnation. Like Hope in Pandora's box, love was the sole essentially divine quality remaining in the earthly casket of the life of Jesus. His All-Presence was resigned, to be regained only when He reappears as the lightning flashing from one end of heaven unto the other, seen by every one. For the while He is limited by space and time. His Omnipotence is relinquished. Now He gains power only by having it delegated to Him by the Father in hours of need and prayer; just in the way of men. Even His all-knowledge is renounced. Of the great day when His mission will be consummated, He says:



‘I know not.’ He has subjected Himself to the limits of human intelligence. This, the hardest to be believed, has often been accounted heresy; but it is one of the divinest tokens of the reality of this incarnating act. All the purely divine prerogatives are returned to the Father for a time. He who had had the form of God, regarding it as no strange thing that He should be on an equality with God, is now in the form of a servant, obscure, subjected, limited to acts of obedience. ‘This is a hard saying; who can hear it?’ This is a wonderful love; who can copy it? For love is left! It is the Suffering Servant of Isaiah who remains when all the divine qualities of the life of the Son have flown back to God. All that caused this Incarnation, and all that followed it, were ‘for Adam’s helpless race.’

This passage sums up St. Paul’s doctrine of the Imitation of Christ. In it we see combined the call to humility, the urge to service, and the willingness to be incarnated—which is love. He states it in its fullness when he writes of the Cross. As one piece of wood thrown athwart another forms a cross, so did the Cross needfully come when man’s will was thrown athwart the will of God. But in His own body, Jesus joined the cross-pieces of His wooden scaffold, and by His love He joined for ever the will of those who follow Him to the will of the Father. ‘Not My will’—not man’s will—‘but Thine be done.’ Those who would follow Him in bringing men’s wills into one with God’s will must needs follow Him to the cross, for it is only there that in a human person can the two be joined.

We can at best but very imperfectly and poorly



copy what He did so thoroughly. It means no leaving of bright thrones and sublime love for us. But it is not, after all, the act of incarnation that the apostle bids us undertake. It is the 'mind' that was in Christ Jesus which must be in us. We must reproduce the perfection of His love in miniature perhaps, for that only is possible; but it must be reproduced. Charles Wesley, writing his hymn-paraphrase of this passage, prays that there may be planted, rooted, and fixed

... in me

All the mind that was in Thee.

Jesu's is a quiet mind, a patient mind, a noble mind, a loving mind, a constant mind. He closes with the mighty climax: 'Jesu's is a perfect mind.' Let us, therefore, go on to perfection. Every one of these attributes of the mind of Christ Jesus is discoverable in our passage; but all are summed up in the phrase, 'a perfect mind.' Jesus had a human mind in perfection. If we would imitate Him at all, we must imitate Him here. Our study will be, therefore, an inquiry into the possibility of our attaining the perfect balance of mind that Jesus had, when limited by conditions such as ours.

We still have to-day many who argue against such a call to perfection of life, and say it is an impossibility. They have never met any one yet whose life could be called perfect; there is always a blot on the escutcheon, some flaw in a character that otherwise might be perfect. They say that those who claim to have attained perfection in Christian living are generally prigs, and that their very claim constitutes a very obvious fault in their lives. All that is true. There are very few people

whose lives could be called perfect when judged by the perfection of Christ; and certainly those who claim to have attained to Christian perfection seem to us, perhaps by their very vanity, to be very imperfect persons indeed. But that is all a misunderstanding of what this call to perfection really is. This is the perfection to which we are called—a sincere and steady purpose to make actual in our lives the moral ideal which we have learned from Jesus; a keen intention to favour all His positive values of life and to suppress the negative. A desire, that is to say, to copy the things we most admire in Him, and to refrain from all those things of which He obviously disapproved, since they were not found in His character. If we can ever *desire* that perfectly, He will account us perfect imitators of Him. For Christian perfection is a perfect desire to live as perfectly as He did. Look after the motives, and He will Himself safeguard the achievements. It means a correspondence of thought with the facts of His life, making the highest aspirations that we have learned from Him workable facts in our lives. And more, it means not only translating our ideas into forms, but into their most beautiful forms. Put into a sentence, therefore, Christian perfection means a disposition of our whole natures towards God, so that the perfection of the love of Christ may be reproduced in us—not simply reflected, as the dead moon reflects such of the glories of the sun as are possible to it—but the merging of ourselves in God so that our poor human lives may be transfigured into His likeness, such as would happen if the sun had the power to rekindle the cold lifeless rocks in

the mountains and valleys of the moon, so that they would burst into flames again and glow with a glory like its own.

Perhaps an illustration will make this clearer. In one of Edward Fitzgerald's mystical poems, there is a very beautiful allegory. The moths, he said, had a god, an idol. Their god was the flame, and they deputed messengers to find the flame. The first moth came back. He had circled round the flame and returned with some slight and imperfect knowledge, some faint intimations of light and heat, with nothing definite. His testimony was rejected. A second came with no fuller knowledge. But a third departed on his embassy. He,

. . . spurred with true desire,  
Plunged at once into the sacred fire.  
Folded his wings within, till he became  
One colour and one substance with the flame.  
He only knew the flame who in it burned,  
And only he could tell who ne'er to tell returned.

That is it. The moth that found its god became like its god. Its wings became the colour of the flame, its wings became the substance of the flame. This disposes of the objection that it is an easy thing to desire perfection, and that if this is all there is in it, Christian perfection becomes an easily realized possibility. It does not! That spurring of the true desire that is willing to merge all, is not comprised in a faint sigh that we wish we were better and we would much like to be like Jesus. It means a dominating passion in life that we may become so absorbed in God, that He may make our poor natures and faculties like His own. Our part in the attainment of the perfect mind that was

in Christ Jesus is the desiring; the completing of that acts rests with Him. That so few attain does not show lack of willingness or power in God, but lack of desire in men. If ever a man desire like Jesus did to be filled with the glory of the Father, God will fill him with glory as He did Jesus; and he will have been helped to attain the perfect mind of his Lord. Has this ever happened fully in a sinful world? It is doubtful, though some might point to certain ‘real Christians’ and believe it true of them.

In this closing study in St. Paul’s ‘Imitatio Christi,’ can we find any practical hints that may be stated simply which will show us how we may perfect our desires and attain more nearly to the mind that was in Him?

We must, at any rate, refuse to compromise with things that do not really matter. That does not mean sin. The evils that lay waste are evidently inadmissible to the man who seeks this end. To say that a man must abstain from sin if he wishes to obey the call to copy Jesus is about as obvious as to say that a man must close his fist if he wishes to defeat his opponent in the boxing ring. But there are many things which are not necessarily wrong in themselves, with which we must not dally overlong if we wish to succeed here. They do not ‘really matter.’ Of course He knows political economy too well to commit Himself to any such statements as that money is in itself anti-social, but money-getting is one of the things that must be put in their right subordinate place if Christian perfection is desired. And He does say that money-getting becomes sinful when it makes a man

compromise with his loyalty to God. It was Carlyle who said that there was an office for which many of us were trying to qualify—that of 'Perpetual President of the Society for Amalgamating God and Mammon'! You cannot amalgamate these two, says our Lord; nor may you try. If the desire to get wealth, even in modest dimensions harden the heart to the appeals of the less fortunate, or encroach upon the time that might be given to happy-hearted service, it becomes an obstacle to Christian perfection. To our immense surprise, education is another such obstacle. Education is, of course, not wrong in itself; but it often becomes an obstacle to the Christian life. Many a young man has no time to read the messages of God, he is so busy reading text-books on engineering. Many a young Christian can find no hour for Christian fellowship with the unseen Christ, but he is regularly to be found sitting at the feet of the tutor of mathematics. And how hardly does an educated man enter into the Kingdom of Heaven! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a man who has spent all his years in the acquisition of knowledge to enter into the Kingdom of God! Not that it is wrong; not that it does inevitably interpose a barrier between man and God, but that it so often engrosses a man's attention to the utter exclusion of the things that do really matter. If we would have this mind in us that was in Christ Jesus, we must not let anything whatever cause us to compromise with our loyalty to Him.

And we must keep our eyes open ever for lovely things. A man who had spent many years as an

invalid wrote shortly before his death that he found himself in his last years much more inclined to notice the finer things of the world than the others. There is considerable hope for one who can train himself to do that. We have no manner of doubt as to what these finer things are. But so often the finer things remain hidden to us while the grosser things are blatant. Goodness is as secret as the violet; evil stares us in the face like a rhododendron bush. A brutal man beating his horse strikes our eyes more readily than a good driver patting his horse's neck at the kerb's edge. One vulgar woman, painted and over-dressed, attracts more attention than a hundred modest women quietly pursuing beautiful lives. Your pet daily paper can find three, four, seven, or eight columns for the ghastly details of the latest murders or the slime of a divorce-court case; but for cases of fine disinterestedness, unselfishness, and philanthropy, you will generally look in vain, or find it only in a series of paragraphs headed ‘News from Many Quarters.’ Why do we love the vulgar and the coarse so much more than the beautiful and sublime? To quote Wesley, who preached often on the call to perfection: ‘In God's name, why are we so fond of sin?’ Let us learn to look for lovely things; it will be an aid to loveliness of life within ourselves.

If we would be perfect, we must live much in company with the perfect. Education by association is the supreme method of Jesus. He chose twelve ‘that they might be with Him.’ It is in the last resort only faithful and continued companionship with Him that will make our lives perfect like His; constant study of His life as shown us in the



Gospels, constant intercourse with Him in prayer. A few years ago the Christian world was thrilled by the publication of Mr. Charles M. Sheldon's epoch-making book, *In His Steps: or, What Would Jesus Do?* The motive of the novel was the difference it would make to individual lives if Christians would picture in particular circumstances the action that would be taken by Jesus. Perhaps the reason why time has detracted from the value of that work is the friction-form in which the principle was presented; but, partly, the conception was faulty in that it pinned down the example to the earthly life of Jesus. The idea is a magnificent one, but if the data for our inquiry into the imitation of Christ is only that which is available in the record of the Gospels, we shall soon find that it is as difficult to determine what Jesus would do in certain circumstances, as it would be after a study of history to suggest what Queen Victoria or Oliver Cromwell would have done in them. Folk who started out with the earnest intention of following in His steps have been discouraged at finding that they did not possess the necessary imagination. If our example is merely dependent on our exercise of imagination, there is a defect somewhere in the conception. This perhaps explains why the book started with a tremendous vogue, but is now never read. Our example has its roots in the earthly life of Jesus, but we have always the continual guidance of His presence. It is not enough to turn to the pages of the Gospels to see if there may be found there anything which may be taken as a precedent for our circumstances. The example is a living one, and not a record on a dead page. We



may live in the company of the Perfect, and He will help us to attainments like His Own.

God can only incarnate Himself to-day in those who are thus willing. In the fullness of time God sent forth His Son. This does not mean that He had set an arbitrary date, so that when the passage of the intervening years was ended, Jesus was born. It was that God had at last found a world just on the point of being ready for His coming; had found a mother, a home and a body fit and pure enough for His indwelling. Then was the act of incarnation. God still enters to dwell and transfigure lives that are ready. The desire and the preparing are ours; the inflowing of His divine Nature is His. To such is made possible Christian perfection, the having in ourselves the mind of Christ. From the perfect mind come the other qualities of the passage; till, like Jesus, we have a quiet mind, meek and responsive as a servant's to the will of God; a patient mind, humble and obedient even under the misunderstandings and persecutions of men; a noble mind, filled with the messages of heaven and ringing still with the music of the angels; a constant mind, unfaltering under the devil's most subtle temptations to sin; a loving mind, that loves even to the steps of the Cross.

This is holy ground. We carry our shoes in our hand, and hide our face, afraid to look on the burning glory. But faithful is He who has given us the call, ‘Be ye perfect,’ and who has promised, ‘Certainly I will be with thee.’

## IN THE FELLOWSHIP

1. Did Jesus give up His omniscience in the Incarnation?
2. 'A perfect desire to do perfectly the perfect will of God.' Is this a sufficient definition of Christian perfection?
3. Give some other necessary stages of preparation for the indwelling of God beside those suggested.

### SECTION III

#### ‘HE LEFT US AN EXAMPLE’

IX. ‘Patience—a Virtue.’

X. ‘Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake.’

XI. ‘The Will to Suffer.’



## STUDY IX

### ‘PATIENCE—A VIRTUE’

*For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.—*  
1 Pet. ii. 20-21.

THE call to imitation on our Lord's own lips is a call to service. Echoed by St. Paul, it is a call to self-abnegation. To St. Peter it meant a call to suffer. His own history shows sufficiently well why it should be this element that made the biggest appeal to him, and through him to his readers. Perhaps he of all the disciples had understood most of the physical agony of his crucified Saviour. Away in his hiding-place, a self-admitted renegade and coward, this man who had denied the dearest friendship of his life had lived through the horror of what was happening as though he bore the pain of it in his own person. He may well have prayed in his shame, even more truly than St. Francis of Assisi in his rapture, that he might feel the very pangs of his Friend who hung and suffered there among that insensate mob. Each unheard blow of the Roman soldiers' hammers found an answering throb in his heart, each minute of the long hours of his Lord's passing from earth was an eternity of hell to himself. The darkness that covered the face of the land had entered into his own soul. The cries of desolation from the Cross were repeated in the depths

of his shamed and desolate heart. Dare we imagine what St. Peter passed through while his Lord was crucified,—knowing him as we do from the Gospels? Legend says he ran away when later he was in danger of crucifixion. He may well have done so,—for the return of a horror once experienced brings a dread almost beyond the power of a strong mind to control. But tradition says he returned to be crucified, only requiring that it be head downwards, lest the glory of suffering just as Jesus did should detract from the perfect offering up of himself that he would make in reparation for his dishonour. The pain of his own slaughter cannot have been worse than he suffered when his Lord, unheard by him, had spoken that prayer including him,—‘Father, forgive them.’ The sufferings of Jesus were a reality in the memory of St. Peter.

Not only so. He was not the first martyr. He had seen others of his Lord’s band persecuted and killed for their faith. They had died, as Christians were supposed to do, patiently! Dr. Glover says that the Christian, besides out-living and out-thinking the pagan, ‘out-died’ him.<sup>1</sup> ‘The pagan noticed the new fortitude in the face of death. Tertullian himself was immensely impressed with it. He had never troubled to look at the Gospels. Nobody bothered to read them unless they were converted already, he said. But he seems to have seen these Christian martyrs die. “Every man,” he said, “who sees it, is moved with some misgiving, and is set on fire to learn the reason.”’ The Christian ‘beat the Pagan hollow’ at dying.

<sup>1</sup> *The Jesus of History*, pp. 214, 215.

St. James the son of Zebedee was executed in A.D. 44; and, ten years later,—that is, in October 54, Nero became Emperor of Rome. He reigned for fourteen years. St. James, the brother of our Lord, was executed in the summer of 61. In July 64 was the infamous burning of Rome, with which the Christians were charged. Then happened that persecution for which the name of Nero has ever been execrated. It was at this time that the epistle of St. Peter was written. In the autumn of that year, he is said to have been put to death.<sup>1</sup> How did these martyrs die whom St. Peter knew? St. James, the brother of St. John, was accompanied, so tradition relates, by one, who was possibly his accuser, who was so impressed by the Christian’s testimony that he then and there professed faith in Christ. He sought forgiveness of the apostle. ‘James, considering a little while, replied, “Peace be to thee,” and kissed him. So these two were beheaded together.’ The other James is said to have met his death with the prayer of his divine Brother, according to the flesh, upon his lips,—‘I entreat Thee, God and Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ So that a priest standing by cried out in vain, ‘Stop your stoning; the Just One is praying for you.’ These may be only legendary, as Dr. Workman suggests; but there is the case of Stephen in Acts vii., with his calm bravery under persecution, and his prayer, ‘Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.’ There is silence in history about the manner of the Christians who died under Nero’s persecution, but we have

<sup>1</sup> These dates and facts are taken from Dr. Workman’s *Persecution in the Early Church*.



every reason to believe that they were not in patience and courage one whit behind those who later suffered under Diocletian, of whom many remarkable instances are written. St. Peter knew the facts of the martyrs before him; they had imitated Christ in their deaths. There was need for patient bravery among his own friends; and to read his first epistle with the memory of those blood-stained days when Christians were smeared with tar and lit as torches, sawn asunder, cast to lions and murdered with all the fiendish ingenuity of a theatrically callous emperor, is to know how his own heart must have burned as he wrote, 'Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings.' . . . 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye.' . . . 'If any man suffer as a Christian (for being a Christian), let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.'

Christians must be so pure in personal life that they would never come into judgement for anything else than for loyalty to the faith. If they were punished for civil or moral offences, and took their physic calmly, it was no credit to them. Even the Stoic publicans did the same. But to suffer for well-doing patiently is acceptable with God.

St. Paul commends the virtue of patience in a word to the Colossians that brings us up with a start; when he prays that his fellows there may be strong enough to be patient cheerfully! (ch. v. 11). This is the same as St. Peter's call when he joins his words 'happy are ye' to the plea for

courage. Now, patience and resignation of spirit seem to go together,—patience and a grimly set face. But patience with joy!—that is when it becomes a Christian virtue. Mrs. Browning has a sonnet in which she pleads that patience is taught by Nature. It is the one beginning, ‘O dreary life, we cry.’ She tells that while we are striving, ambitious and discontented with life, ‘the generations of the birds sing through our sighing; and the flocks and herds serenely live.’ The sea unwearied beats its eternal breakers on the shore, and makes music of its unending task. Then she prays that she may have such

. . . patience as a blade of grass

Grows by, contented through the heat and cold.

Patient with joy! Most of us had not thought of that.

‘Strong enough to be patient cheerfully.’ Perhaps we had not even connected patience with strength; but after all, it is only the weak who are not patient. Mr. Kipling’s poem, ‘If,’ ought to have revealed to us that the ability to hang on is a sign of manly strength. At any rate, every cartoon of the British bulldog in the pages of *Punch* should have reminded us that quiet, ungiving tenacity is a token of power. ‘To patient faith the prize is sure,’—and faith is a manifestation of strength. We must be strong indeed if we are to be long-suffering, whatever happens. Especially if our courage is a cheerful one.

Consider the patience of Jesus in other forms than that of the forgiving spirit in which He lived His last human hours. It takes a strong soul to suffer fools gladly and to keep an unconquerable

soul even under the bludgeonings of fate. So many men are embittered by the things that happen to them. Somebody, in the church maybe, played them an admittedly shabby trick. There were perhaps several people involved. They became soured, left the church, and have talked against it ever since. Or if they did not leave the church, they joined or formed an 'awkward squad.' They are never so happy afterwards. If they are outside the church, when service-time comes round they are like a bear that has lost her whelps,—to use a Bible illustration. In either case you may sometimes overhear them thinking, 'Where is the blessedness I knew?' Religion has ceased to be a happy fact for them, and has become merely an object for cynical comment; all because they had had not the strength of soul to be patient enough to suffer a few fools gladly! If they could only have held on cheerfully for a little while! How tenderly our Lord held on to those who would not understand—how patient He is still with those who slight Him! 'If Thou, Lord, shouldst be quick to mark iniquity!' Remember how long-suffering Christ is with all His erring followers,—and copy that patience.

It takes a lot of patience to bear with the slow movement of great causes; to maintain hope and a cheerful courage with a cherished cause when all our labours seem to be in vain in the Lord. 'It is hard to work for God . . . and not sometimes lose heart.' It is hard, very hard, to die in faith, not having received the promise; harder still to have to plod on, more or less certain that you will have to die without seeing very much progress

made in that dear cause. In Temperance work we seem sometimes to make such little progress, and weak men leave the cause and put further obstacles in the way by leaving. ‘No more war,’ we cry; but while we work for peace every civilized power is arming for strife.

Dr. Faber’s hymn is rich in inspiration to the servant of God:

Thrice blest is he to whom is given

The instinct that can tell

That God is on the field when He

Is most invisible.

Then learn to scorn the praise of man,

And learn to lose with God;

For Jesus won the world through shame,

And beckons thee His road.

Hold on patiently, therefore, though the progress of the Kingdom be slow. Jesus said it would be, but it did not cause Him to lose heart. Even though there be hindrances in the minds of men to whom the message should be preached—wayside ground, thorny ground, stony ground—yet the Kingdom would surely grow. Even though there should be hindrances coming from the outside forces of evil, an enemy sowing dandelion among the wheat, yet the Kingdom would grow. Though it started small as a mustard seed, yet it would become mighty. Though but tiny as a handful of leaven, seemingly smothered under the social forces amongst which it was placed, it would presently permeate the whole lump.

God is represented sometimes in the Old Testament as if He were impatient. But if God is truly like Jesus, as Jesus said He is, He is the Eternally Patient. Patience always means some measure of

unspoken suffering. 'Add to your patience godliness,' says the first chapter of the next epistle. Patience is the nearest stepping-stone to God-likeness. Jesus was never more like God than when He bore with the pettiness and slowness of heart of His disciples. He left us an example!

There is a level of courage that bears without crying out, the due reward of anti-social deeds. A certain rough philosophy bids men lie on the bed they have made, take their gruel without complaining—and similar proverbs with the same intent. This is a type of personality that attains a curious kind of popularity, for our admiration at the pluck which can take punishment uncomplainingly tends to minimize our distaste for the wrong committed. A Christian must obviously not fall below the level of that life. If he be overtaken in a fault—and, as Solomon, who knew, said, 'There is no man that sinneth not'—he must show his penitence by his fortitude under the unhappy consequences in which his sin involves him. That is to say, the Christian must even on the lowest level be higher in his conduct than the ordinary evil-doer. The Christian must let his pluck signify his own regret, not merely his strong manhood.

That is the lowest level, though; for the Christian's constant effort is that he shall become free from such failings as are counted punishable by God and men. To be patient when one is 'buffeted' for undoubted faults is no virtue, even though the manner of the patience denote a true penitence. To be patient when those around us hurt us by their folly and anti-fellowship; to be patient, though the cause dear to our hearts move slowly; this is to

imitate the life of Christ. Yet, as we indicated in the opening paragraphs, this is only the beginning of the story, for it is not only patience with foolish folk and with slowly-moving causes, nor fortitude when suffering for one's faults that is enjoined. St. Peter is echoing his Lord's own words, ‘Blessed are ye when men persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad!’ He would have his friends follow His example. Persecution is an ugly word, and we may wish to believe that our age has got beyond anything of the kind. But though the methods of the world may have altered, the results of its disapproval can be formidable enough. The persecution may not be as coarse and as violent as in former days, but it is not less persecution because it shows itself in half-concealed scorn, in social neglect, and in religious reprobation. Our Lord would have His followers face the prospect and accept the experience, if it should come to them, without surprise and without bitterness. Nay, more, He bids them accept it with joy. Just as He did, who beneath the very shadow of the cross spoke of His joy—who for the joy set before Him endured the cross.

Joy! Partly because such have admission to the communion of strong souls who were courageous with joy in tribulation. Partly, too, because there are few such far-reaching influences for good as opposition bravely and cheerfully borne. ‘Great is your reward.’ There is no reward so precious to the truly Christian mind, nor one so entirely desirable as the privilege of having been able to help on the dear cause of Christ. This is the



motive for patient bravery in persecution, and to this extent it is true that we endure for the sake of the reward, just as Jesus did! But not a personal reward—just the high privilege of having been able to remind our detractors of a power that is derived from Christ, so that those who blessed when they were persecuted may anon be blessed by their persecutors! 'The more men multiply our sufferings the more does the number of the faithful grow.' . . . 'The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.' To quote Justin: 'The Church is a vine which, the more it bleeds under the pruning-knife, the more fruitful it becomes.' This is great glory.

When Carpus was nailed upon the cross, he was observed to smile. 'What made you laugh?' asked his tormentors, in astonishment. 'I saw the glory of the Lord,' was the answer, 'and was glad.' 'If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.'

### IN THE FELLOWSHIP

1. Make a classified list of the times when Jesus exercised cheerful patience. Can you find hymns which call for the same virtue?
2. Rats leave a sinking ship, but apparently not a slowly-moving one! Is Nature more patient than humanity? What of the man who deserts a cause?
3. 'Faith is a manifestation of strength.' Prove it!



## STUDY X

### ‘PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS’ SAKE’

*For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.—1 Pet. iii. 17, 18.*

THE subject is continued. For a season Peter's readers were in heaviness through manifold trials; their faith is being tried by fire; there is compensation in the thought that their conscience is void of offence, and there may be even joy in the knowledge that it is for righteousness and not for evil doing that they must suffer. St. Peter takes the argument a step forward, however, in linking their sufferings with those of their Lord. He had previously bidden them imitate the manner of the death of Christ; here he bids them bear through all their trials a motive like their Lord's. We have seen how St. Paul, with sublime audacity, held up the Incarnation for human imitation. St. Peter now, in similar wise, maintains the hope that we may copy within earthly limits our Saviour's redemptive work. This is almost too bold a thought to face, but this motive underlies all the teaching that he gives these patient followers of Jesus.

By His suffering for sin, the just for the unjust, He brought us to God. That was His divine purpose. These Christians, strangers to him, scattered by the Dispersion 'throughout Pontus,

Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,' to whom the fires of trial would presently reach, if they had not come already, must suffer as just persons. Let them have in their patience the hope that by their endurance they might bring to God others who would witness the confession of their faith. Every heart would know its own bitterness, but in every heart would throb the joy of knowing that they were patient as was their Lord, sheep dumb before the slaughterers as He was; and that the same blessed prospect was before them that was within Him when He endured the cross for the sake of the joy of bringing ransomed sinners back to God. No persecution for the time was joyous, but only grievous, but afterwards how glad a thing to know that by their good confession they had shared with Him the travail that makes His Kingdom come.

We protested earlier against the unthinking use of the word 'love.' It is even a more heinous fault to use improperly the word 'cross.' Folk with inconvenient happenings in their lives, with sorrows or crippling ailments, sometimes talk of them as their cross. 'It is my cross,' they say, 'and I must bear it.' With every sympathy for those who suffer so, it is yet an entirely wrongful use of the word. To 'take up the cross' is to have the suffering shot through and through with the redemptive purpose of Calvary. We only bear a cross when we endure suffering for the sake of bringing some one nearer to God. Mere suffering of itself, which happens apart from one's own willing acceptance and the good results of which can only be the strengthening of one's own soul, must not be described so. These readers of this epistle were

bearing the cross for their Lord if through all their persecution were the intention that their martyrdom should be an evangelizing act.

There might be other reasons for their suffering patiently. Not every one who refused to accept the way of escape had necessarily the zeal of an evangelist. St. Paul recognized that there could be heroism divorced from real cross-bearing, when he said that though he gave his body to be burned, yet, ‘ without love ’ it would profit him nothing. Generally no doubt, it was a horror of being unfaithful to their Saviour that kept men from recanting when release was offered if they would deny their faith; but it might be that some would go on to the end from mere pride of soul, the stoicism that will not give up any cause when once it has been embraced. ‘ Without love for Jesus,’ martyrdom was profitless. In the same way it might be simple ‘ loyalty to the side ’—a refusal to ‘ let companions down ’—that would brace the accused to a martyr’s courage; or a desire to mortify the body by a final sacrificial act; or even the pleasure in pain that fanatics know how to find. ‘ Without love for the wanderers from God,’ however, the torches in Nero’s gardens would burn in vain. But if it were love for God and men testifying itself through the flames, that would be a light which should never be put out.

Perhaps St. Peter had little fear that these less worthy motives would animate his fellow-Christians in their persecution; for they argue an unhealthy mental state which should be foreign to lovers of Jesus. He must insist, nevertheless, that they shall most desire, by their death if need be, no less than

by their life, to extend the gospel of Christ, and bring men to God by dying as well as by living, as they had themselves been brought to God by the love of their Saviour. Great is the reward, even on earth, of those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, when they know that some who have seen their courage will desire to learn the secret that kept them brave and happy even in suffering which they could have avoided by desertion. That result may not always have followed, but the intention of the soul of the persecuted Christian must always be the gift of such an opportunity.

In ordinary human measure, therefore, this call to imitation is a call to an evangelizing zeal so passionate that it will be hindered by no opposition, but will remain the leading motive of life, even under persecution and to the point of martyrdom. It is not to seek suffering for suffering's sake, nor yet to wish to endure pain because Jesus bore so much; it is to copy the great yearning of the heart of Christ to bring men home to God, and to have this yearning in such a degree that it will be checked by no obstacle, however terrifying.

Our Lord's joy was that of the finder, the pastor and the leader. His metaphors emphasize always one or more of these employments. Particularly do His references to Himself as Shepherd declare the motive of His evangelism. He would find the lost sheep, He found the flock harried and scattered, He would lead those of His own who would follow Him. The Cross was the grand statement of this purpose, and there was joy for Him even there because the joy of these divine occupations was something that even malice and crucifixion could

not take from Him. It is this zeal that we must copy if we would be imitators of Him.

A glance at the concordance is needed if we would understand how frequently the shepherd metaphor was on His lips. Several other important passages have been shaded over by the supreme word on the subject in the tenth chapter of St. John, and the parable of the lost sheep in the fifteenth of St. Luke. He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; He sent His followers first to the lost sheep of Israel; He had compassion on the people because they fainted and were scattered like sheep having no shepherd; at the last day, it would be the sheep, His own sheep, whom He would welcome into the heavenly fold. It seems as if this metaphor were necessary to the thought of His evangelism. It was as a Shepherd that He lay down His life; He will not lose thought of His mission even at the point of death, for it all will have happened ‘for their sakes.’

Many of our Lord’s parables are parables of finding; but the chief of them is the finding of the lost sheep. He came to ‘seek’ that which was ‘lost.’ His was the joy of the merchantman seeking goodly pearls and that of the ploughman who found the treasure in the field; but particularly that of the shepherd going in search of the straying sheep. A human soul is so unexpectedly valuable when it is found; ninety and nine just persons needing no repentance have the value of exactly ninety and nine just persons. But the one on the mountain side; what is its value to the shepherd? It represents in its poor, small body all the care that has ever been given to the whole flock. Judged

by God's valuation, it is not a one per cent. value, being just one out of a hundred once in the fold. All the love spread over the whole is concentrated in the person of this one wanderer. This is divine arithmetic; there is no profit and loss, for loss ceases to be estimated when the gain is so considerable. To win back this stray sheep gives as much joy as if another ninety-nine properly behaved sheep were offered as a present. He rejoiceth more over that than over all the rest. No sufferings gained in reaching it down in that mountain chasm are remembered when once it has been brought to safety. As the ploughman in the parable did not count it sacrifice to give up all his luxuries, all his comforts, all his necessities when by losing them for the time he could gain the far exceeding treasure in the field,—so the shepherd loses thought of his wounds when at last he can pick up the lost one in his arms.

None of the ransomed ever knew  
How deep were the waters crossed,  
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through,  
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.

He was not likely ever to tell them, and it would not be patient courage that would keep Him silent. The agony of the outward journey was for ever expunged by the rapture in His heart on the return. The joy of tracing and recapturing the lost!—Calvary was worth it!

If the evangelizing joy ever possesses our hearts as it held His, we shall be willing to suffer all that comes to us before we find; in knowledge of the great gladness that will be ours when we have wooed and won in the name of Christ.



The joy of having something to tell which everybody else is simply dying to hear is one of the wildest delights of which most natures are capable. Gossips feel the lesser order of this pleasure when they have a secret that their next-door neighbour does not know. It is possible sometimes to envy the newsboys who can provide the papers which the crowd around is waiting with outstretched hands to receive. The preacher knows that joy when he stands before his people to tell them something about Jesus, and sees in their eager faces how anxious they are to hear. Jesus knew that joy when He met men whom other people scorned, and knew that He could tell them what they yearned to hear of a Father who did not spurn them as men did, but loved them and longed that they should be ‘ His own.’ Have we this highest form of joy that Jesus had? There are multitudes just waiting for the word of hope and sympathy which we can speak. There are crowds of men and women waiting to be found for Christ. If we through indolence or selfishness or timidity withhold that message, we miss much that would help to make our Christian experience complete; and how much they miss to whom we deny the Gospel that they need. ‘ The hungry sheep look up and are not fed.’ Jesus told that there was joy among the angels when a sinner was found. If, then, it is true that there is gladness in the presence of God over sinners returning, how glad must Jesus Himself have been! The angels were only watchers; Jesus was the Seeker. If we have missed this joy of evangelism, we have forgotten that service like this is God’s way of



making our cup of happiness full to overflowing. The tired body, the spent gift, the rebuffs, the nights of agonizing prayer, the persecution for righteousness' sake; all are forgotten in the share we have of heaven's highest joy as we come to God and say, 'Father, here is Thy loved one brought back to Thee.'

Said John Wesley, in his 'Twelve Rules of a Helper'; 'You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want you most. . . . It is not your business to . . . or to . . . but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance; and, with all your power, to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord.' However much we may desire to be active in the affairs of benevolent institutions, and to expend our leisure and influence on local and subordinate charities, our first call is to the service of evangelism. It costs more than any other service can, but 'He left us an example'; and if it does cost, the cost is forgotten in the joy of bringing men home to God.

Our Lord not only overlooked His wounds in the joy of finding. His compassion was that of the pastor. The ninety-nine were not neglected because He went for hours in search of the lost. Wherever there were shepherdless people, He made Himself their Shepherd. The flock did not always suffer through its own folly; there were strangers who led the sheep astray through ignorance; and hirelings who fled through insufficient care. The poor ones were tired and despairing,

knowing not where the pasture was where they might feed. He knew; and when He found them scattered and despairing, He led them to green pastures and still waters. The ‘snow and sheep’ paintings of Farquharson have become famous; but there is one that he should paint. A flock upon the hillside, with meadowland beyond them where they cannot see. The sheep should be shown fainting on the ground, and then the Good Shepherd beside them, His heart melting with tenderness, picking up the lambs in His arms, and leading all to the pasture where they would be. It is not always sin of the man himself that brings distress; often it is ill leading on the part of inept or false shepherds. We, who know where safety and plenty for the soul are to be found, must act the shepherd’s part for the distressed; and be true pastors going over the desolate lands to the disconsolate, and bringing them to the one fold and the one Shepherd. Finder, Pastor, Leader. ‘I am the Good Shepherd, and I lay down My life for the sheep.’ This was so much the thought of Jesus that won the love of His followers, that in the catacombs of Rome, that underground burial-place of the early Christians, we find no representations of the cross as in our later graveyards, but over and over again roughly graven in the sandstone walls the picture of a shepherd, with the words, ‘Bonus Pastor Sum’—‘I am the Good Shepherd.’ The cross is contained in it; all the theology of the life and death of Christ is in the tenth of John. He came into the folds of earth by the same door as the sheep; He cares and loves and tends; He wins the lost back again; He leads

the faithful to the best green pastures; He lays down His life in their defence to keep them safe, even for the others who are not in His fold. That is the evangelistic motive; and as He did, so should we.

This discussion of the shepherd metaphor is appropriate here, for it seems in the mind of St. Peter as he wrote the letter. He had himself gone far astray, but Jesus descended into the hell of shame, where he had sunk, to win him back, and had welcomed him with bloodstained hands—hands pierced through with nails and a heart pierced through with sorrows now forgotten in the joy of winning His loved one home. 'Ye were once going astray,' he writes in this very epistle, 'but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.' They had been won back by the evangelism of Christ, who endured the cross, despising the shame; now they must share in this evangelism, even as he would to whom his Lord by the lake had said, 'Feed My lambs. . . . Feed My sheep.' May the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, make you perfect in the work of evangelism.

### IN THE FELLOWSHIP

1. Is timidity as shameful a reason for refusing the work of an evangelist as indolence and selfishness?
2. Does any form of 'martyrdom' to-day offer the chance of Christian testimony?
3. What are the evangelistic openings immediately before us in this district? What will it cost to undertake them? Is there any reason for shirking them?

## STUDY XI

### 'THE WILL TO SUFFER'

*Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.—1 Pet. iv. 1, 2.*

A FAVOURITE phrase with New Testament writers is one that in varying words conveys the thought of being 'dead to sin.' Between the old life lived before the love of God was known and accepted and the new life which is lived henceforth in the power of Christ, there is a barrier of death. The notion of the cross is introduced into all these suggestions. Christians have 'died with Christ,' have been 'crucified with Christ,' and by this death in the spirit, which corresponded in metaphor and somehow in fact to their Lord's death in the flesh, they have put off the former works of sinful life. This is done as completely as is the mortal body discarded when the disembodied spirit leaves it to decay away in death. And after death the resurrection. The analogy is complete. For as Christ rose from the dead 'in newness of life,' so the sinner baptized into his Lord's death rises with Him into a state of life that is new and glorious. He is freed from the evil

past as though he had indeed died out of its influences; and he rises into a new world of possibilities and power.

'Dead to sin'! Let us examine first the implications of the phrase. When we consider that it was sins just like ours that caused Jesus to be crucified, when we realize that He offered Himself to death to save us from the inevitable consequences of just such sins as ours; then, having confessed our sins to the One who is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, we are in a position to act as though we were dead so far as sin is concerned. There is forgetfulness in death. The treasures of learning that have been acquired in a long lifetime of study are forgotten at death. Favourite stories, conversations with friends, pleasures that once delighted us, are not remembered then. One of the psalmists was right when he exclaimed, 'There is no remembrance in death.' As we stand by the grave, we think, 'He has forgotten'; and when we act as though we were dead in respect of sin, this is true—we may forget. When God forgives, He forgets; and He gives to us the right to forget as well. The ancient poets believed that when a man died, he passed through a stream in Hades, the river of Lethe, or Forgetfulness, so that when he reached the other side he had forgotten all he knew and was on earth. When a man has passed through an experience of pardon and resolve, the experience we call conversion, he may forget the kind of life he used to live. It need not be a haunting memory. He may start afresh with a new life. Some good Christians have not understood this; they are for ever trying to

remember how desperately bad they used to be before their conversion. Sometimes it takes away much from the joy of their Christian life. It is sometimes exaggerated, so that they think themselves to have been much worse than they really were, and they develop something like a spiritual pride in their past evil days. It is all unnecessary; they may forget.

Yet this is by no means the whole truth. There is memory in death, but it is memory with a difference. Many of the things we have known on earth will be recalled in the after-world. But the new state will be reached, with a fuller way of looking at things; a sort of soul's fourth dimension. Amiel tells how he was looking at a scene in Switzerland when suddenly there flashed over his mind another scene of his early days. For forty years he had never thought of it, and unexpectedly it came back. ‘The book of our consciousness is open,’ he wrote, ‘at the page of the present; but the wind sometimes blows over the pages we have passed, and we recall what we have done that we thought we had forgotten.’ And death, he thought—for he brooded much about death—death must be like that. We look back on the pages of the forgotten from the aspect of the further place we have reached.

When we are dead to sin we may forget; but even if memory persists beyond the experience of conversion, we may view that sin from a new standpoint. To quote a sentence from old prayer-meetings: we shall know that we were sinners, but shall know that we are sinners saved by grace. If we remember our sins at all in the new life, we



shall remember them as that which introduced us to our Lord and the remembrance will keep us true to Him and eager in the service by which we may bring others into the grace wherein we stand.

The dead are unresponsive; take no notice of any remark addressed to them, make no response to any call. That is one of the chief terrors that death has for the human mind. Those who love the one who has departed speak to him, whisper, cry out to him; but he lies unheeding, unresponsive. Mrs. Browning reaches an expression of this when she writes of how we see a light on the brow of the dear departed ones, but it is only the daylight; we clasp the hand and yet feel lonely. This unresponsiveness is one of death's frightening ways. The questions we would fain ask must now remain unanswered; the love we would show in love's most tender forms brings no response. But yet it is this fact which is our highest glory and cause for praise, when we reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin.

When we take hold of the forgiveness which Jesus by His death has won for us, then sins when they come to us find us unresponsive. Their most enticing whispers bring no answer from us. Their suggestions, which were at one time so strong that we could not hold out against them, now leave us unmoved. Sin may woo us, may bully us, but it leaves us cold, as though dead to it. That is the experience of many whom we once called hardened sinners. St. Augustine, in his *Confessions*, says that the sin of theft once delighted him. He would take for sheer joy of stealing, would ransack the orchard of a struggling farmer, not because he



needed or even wanted the fruit, but for joy of evil doing. He wondered afterwards what it was that changed him, and knew it was the cross of Christ. For he never once felt after his experience the desire to steal. And that with other sins is the experience of many.

There is perhaps another illustration by which we may learn the meaning of the apostolic references of being dead to sin. The dead man has ended his career. Death puts the full stop at the close of a man's biography. The influence of the mighty dead is ours; their example is ours; but they have had to down tools. Sometimes it means that their work is half completed; sometimes they live long after their task is ended; but soon or late the cutting off of the ties must come, and as our Lord said of His own work, it will be said of their career: ‘It is finished.’ That is what happens when we learn to be dead to sin. We make a full end of it. Our career of evil is completed. And as those who die in the Lord rise to a new life, a new career of service and glory, so we die unto sin but live unto righteousness. The resurrection from the life of sin that is ended is the beginning of a new career of Christlikeness. St. John says of the Christian: ‘He does not commit sin.’ That is because he has, so to say, died to sin, and the sin career is past.

The purpose of the death of Christ was to secure separation from sin, not for Himself, but for all men. By that offering, all, as we have seen, have the right to such forgetfulness and unresponsiveness and ending in regard to sin as death typifies. But again the illustration is pushed farther. Again Christians are

bidden to have the mind that was in Christ. Not now that they themselves may be kept separate from sin—that has been done for them by their Lord—but that they may themselves, by having the will to suffer, share in the remedial and redemptive work of Christ. They must be willing to suffer and die with Him, not solely that they may have a resurrection into a new life of holiness, but that by dying with Him they may help in the salvation of the world. Their suffering will be purgatorial; it will be as was St. Paul's 'thorn in the flesh,' a constant reminder of days before the change in their lives, with the emphasis always upon the Power that made the change. So, to sum up the doctrine of the Imitation in this epistle, the followers of the Lord must copy Him in the patience with which they meet persecution, in the evangelizing passion that holds firm to the end the bringing of men back to God, and the desire of aiding even to the point of suffering the incoming in full of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Kingdom of Heaven is the state in which all men will have died unto sin; and that Kingdom suffereth violence, the subjects of it are afflicted by the strong oppositions of evil. Men apart from Christ spend their time in the flesh according to the lusts of men. But Christ suffered to take away the sins of the world. Not alone the sins of individuals living in the world, but also the great world sins that exercise dominance over the hearts of all. These world sins always crucify goodness. To side with Christ in issue against them means undoubted suffering and loss, but it does not mean defeat. For Calvary was never a symbol of failure. To side

with Christ against world sins means triumph through suffering. He came to take away world sins. They concentrated with unwonted fury for the supreme attack upon the Son of God, but the very vastness of their onslaught was the first sign of their ultimate overthrow. As when a howitzer battery, intent upon a particularly heavy barrage, unmasks its camouflage and exposes its position by its very violence, so the culmination of the efforts of the forces of evil grouped in mass formation for the slaying of the Lord of heaven dated their weakness from the very moment of mightiest attack. We can for ever after identify them. When the forces were scattered it was hard to know their place and strength; but they have no greater might than they revealed at Calvary and no further reinforcements. It needs courage to face them; it will demand our most gallant efforts; but they are there to be defeated. When they are defeated the Kingdom of Heaven will have come in its fullness; every man will live a life that has ceased from sin;

And every life shall be a song,  
When all the earth is paradise.

It is worth suffering loss, worth martyrdom, to gain this end. Our Lord gave no false promises of easy triumph. It would mean hard marching, short commons, and fierce fighting; but the end is sure. Let Christians but have the will to suffer buoyed up by the prospect of certain victory, and the last blows for the Kingdom may soon be struck.

In all these calls to men to have the will to suffer for righteousness' sake, there is a warning to them not to lapse into the old ways of sin. The metaphor fails for the 'backslider.' St. Paul realized that,

and asked in surprise: 'How shall we, who have died to sin, live any longer therein?' That, however, is the alternative, if men will not suffer hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Once they died to sin, but now they live again in sin! How can this be? It is that they have missed the resurrection, and have come back to the old world in the old estate. They have not gained resurrection nor a glorified soul like the body glorified of our Lord; rather it is like the return of Lazarus, who, without a glorified body came back with that which had begun decay, to pick up his life at the point where death had broken it. They have entered the ante-chamber of heaven, but have been called back again to earth. So Dr. Peake comments on these verses: 'Our voluntary suffering in the way of righteousness denotes our fellowship with Christ, and our breaking with sin. Let there be, therefore, no return on the part of converts to the evil life of paganism, even when urged to it by old comrades.'<sup>1</sup>

There is a danger that fear of suffering will keep many from the heroism which the cause of the Kingdom demands. Many who had been known as Christians deserted in the hour of trial, and went back to the old life. 'This is a hard saying,' said some when they heard of suffering: 'and many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.' Jesus let them go. They were not the stuff of which heroes are made, but just such as dreams are made of. The world would not be won away from its dominant sins by these. Regretfully, He watched them go—saw the dust in the distance cover finally their retreating forms. 'Will ye also

<sup>1</sup> *One-Volume Commentary* on this passage.

go away?’ He asked the little company that remained. When He returned, He wondered, would He find faith on the earth; or would all have deserted? It was no lasting despondency, but the dread of desertion when such high tasks were afoot which seemed ever and again upon His mind. There were some who were willing to suffer reproach for His sake and the gospel’s, who would leave all and follow Him, who would be worthy of Him because they loved not father nor mother nor any earthly thing more than they loved Him; yet there were so many who were glad to be with Him when He gave the wonder-food as manna from the skies, but turned away at the first hint of inconvenience and pain. The Kingdom could only be established by those who like Him were scornful of suffering in the face of high interests; it can only be extended by those who share the salvation which they have by sharing in the sorrow of His cross, who let pain purge and purify and not harden, and who willingly endure the opposition of men animated by the world-sins with all that opposition means, in order that the world may cease from sin.

Till these efforts are successful, and all men are subjects of that Kingdom, the world itself lies under a curse. It groaneth and travaileth in pain. Earthquakes and eruptions of earth, the shaking of the hills with thunder, and the rending of the skies with lightning, all the terrible happenings of violent Nature, show how very Nature is waiting for the redemption of the sons of God. Death has universal sway. But when the Kingdom shall have fully come, such evils shall have ceased. They wait in bondage till our work shall be completed. When

the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, the former things shall pass away. Death itself shall be no more.

What a heavy responsibility is man's! Not only may he, by adding to the world's sorrow and sin, put off so far the coming of the great day when the triumph of Jesus shall be complete; but by his listlessness in the interests of the Kingdom, he is delaying the time when in place of anguish shall be peace, and instead of an earthly hell a heaven on earth: delaying the great purposes of God, who is waiting to exercise His beneficent power for men until men are fitted to be entrusted with new powers He will bestow: perpetuating the misery and shame of earth, and keeping men or allowing them to be kept without protest in conditions where their divinely appointed possibilities are in check. For why? Because indeed there are not enough who, by having the will to suffer in the cause of the Kingdom, are intent on bringing in the Happy Age when the strongholds of evil shall be defeated and finally overthrown, and this world made ready as a habitation of God! The call to imitate Christ in His sufferings is given, not only that we should have the same evangelizing passion as He, so that we shall bring individual men 'out of the world' and 'home to God'; but so that the world's redemption may be complete, and a regenerated society presented to God, who may take away the causes of sorrow not humanly caused and Himself come and dwell in the midst of them.



IN THE FELLOWSHIP

1. Is it a sin to be tempted? Or does temptation argue some untouched, buried evil not yet ‘dead to sin’?
2. If so, how do you explain the temptations of Christ? Were they different from ours as coming from without Him—ours coming up from an evil past? Would our temptations be only like His if we were more like Him?
3. Try to explain ‘The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence.’



#### SECTION IV

‘AS HE . . . SO OUGHT WE’

XII. ‘Usque ad Mortem.’



## STUDY XII

### ‘USQUE AD MORTEM’

*Hereby we perceive the love of God, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*—1 John iii. 16.

ST. PAUL'S call to self-abnegation was taken up by St. Peter, and prolonged into a call to suffer. Still a further stage is reached in St. John, who, using his Lord's own words, ‘ought to,’ utters the call to sacrifice. For love of the ‘outsider,’ St. Peter declared, we should be willing to go to any length or depth of suffering that we may bring men to God. It is love of the brethren, of the fellow member in Christ, which St. John instances as that which prompts the Christian to lay down his life. This is loyalty deeply underlined; love written in red letters of blood.

After all, Jesus did not die simply to save the outsiders. In just as real a sense, He died for His disciples. The Good Shepherd gave his life for the sheep of His own pasture, as well as for those that were not yet of His fold. Very definitely, He bore the punishment instead of them, and shielded them from danger by the willing offering up of Himself. With the result that they, rightly interpreting such a self-forgetful love, loved Him more for His death and the way of it, than they had loved Him for His companionship and teaching. He gave His

life for us, they often said. If we would copy Him, it must be not only by a willingness to undergo martyrdom that by our witness we may ransom men with Him, but also that we may shield with our own bodies those who are ours in Christ.

They had never learned what love was like until they saw it on the cross. This was the microscope through which they saw its hidden details. For ever after they ransacked their vocabulary to find adjectives sufficient to describe it. We have come to know love, this apostle cries; the most stupendous discovery of all the ages. They had found its 'reach and capability.' It extends to the uttermost and is capable of limitless sacrifice. From now, love for them must always have this connotation. If they cannot love men as Jesus loved them, they cannot love God at all.

So we turn again to the love of God. How even when He saw the creatures He had made turning away from Him resolutely in favour of the glittering attractions of sin, and bringing shame and sadness to themselves by breaking the laws that used otherwise would have made only for their blessedness, His purpose did not change. 'Love never faileth.' Instead of blotting them out of existence in impatient anger, as the Old Testament writers sometimes mistakenly thought Him capable of doing, He used all the resources of His divine love in charming them back to what He would have them be. The phrase 'abiding love' is printed on every page of the chequered history of men. He sent them teachers to condemn their sin, and to echo the message of that unfailing love. They rejected these prophets, until at last He sent His own Son,



who would not so much talk about the love of God as live it, and if need be die for it. It needed that He should die, but ever since, in ever-widening circles, men have acknowledged that the only abiding thing in a universe of change is the open-hearted love of God, and His purpose that there should live a race capable of becoming devils who should yet by their glad free act, love Him, commune with Him, and translate the will that is eternally done in heaven into the terms of earth.

It is this love which Christians have accepted that should make them different from all the other inhabitants of earth. They must show the same permanence in their love and purpose that they find in the purpose and love of God. Their love-contacts must be as abiding as the gospel declares His to be. It must be stable and immovable, whatever happens. If the love that inspires us is unchanging, then must the love of us who are inspired be unchanging too. With God there is no variable-ness, and there must needs be steadfastness too in the sons of God. It is only those who share in the love of God whose love has essential permanence in it.

Indeed, there is very little love in the world with abiding value, apart from that of Christians. Even among Christians, what is called love often shows signs of impermanence, and therefore proves itself not love. For love abideth faithful, and cannot deny itself. ‘And now abide faith, hope, and love.’ Stress that word ‘abide,’ as it was meant to be stressed. Love abides. It never does anything but abide, if it is love. Shakespeare knew that when he wrote: ‘Love is not Love that alters when it altera-

tion finds.' Love loves on, whatever happens. Loves when the loved one lives to be a prodigal. Loves still when the loved one turns to be an enemy. Loves when the loved one nails the lover to a cross.

In the days of the martyrs, it cost something for Church folk to be loyal to each other; and 'See how these Christians love!' the pagans said wonderingly to one another. 'See how these Christians love,' the man of the world says cynically when he sees denomination fighting denomination, and hears of members of the same church at daggers drawn. There must be a divinely-abiding love in all our Church attachments. An old-time song urged that 'there is beauty all around when there's love at home.' And there is usefulness all around a church only when there is love in it; no mere faint esteem that can be dispelled by a seemingly unbrotherly act, but a love that lasts.

Jesus told us how we were to love God—with every part of our personality. Then He added that we should love our neighbours 'as ourselves.' That is a necessary code of conduct for people who are self-pleased. But He gave as well, and practised, a higher ethic; we should love others as God has loved us. John, who had leaned on the breast of his Lord, had learned this from Him, and states it here. We should refuse to use the word 'love' of anything less than that which has a likeness to the love wherewith God has loved us. Jesus by the lake asked Peter three times: 'Do you love Me?' Papini suggests that this thrice-repeated request was intended to remind the disciple of the three acts of denial. Is it not much more likely that He was

wanting His disciple to be absolutely certain that his profession of attachment had elements of permanence in it before he committed himself to the use of the word ‘love’? The disciple in his replies seems indeed to have come to understand that this is so. We say our love has grown cold. Can love as God knows it ever grow cold? Our study in the love values of Jesus should remind us that, whatever happens, ‘we ought also’ to love our fellow-Christians with an unfailing love like His.

The temptation that beset the love of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane was that He should wash His hands of all who had refused Him. Men had been callous, unwilling, cruel. Why should He love them still? These people did not want Him; His own disciples would be among the first to forsake Him. Should He let them go? Should He give up His loving purpose for them, extricate Himself as He might have done from the difficult position in which His previous teaching had placed Him, go back to His normal life for a while, and then presently ascend to the Father with His message implanted in their memories but with the great work of redemption not accomplished? Such suggestions came to Him during that night of awful prayer. If it had been anything less than love that He felt for them, He would perhaps have chosen the easy way as He stood at the cross-roads in Gethsemane that night. If He had been a hireling shepherd, who cared not! But as in His temptations in the wilderness, so here in the garden temptation, we who read the story after Him, see that there was never any real fear that the devil would defeat Him. Because He was the Good

Shepherd, and loved His sheep, He laid down His life for them. Love never lets go. When love comes to the cross-roads, it always goes straight on. That is the test of its reality. And when love does not flinch even when it comes to the cross, that is the test of its strength. Love cannot fail, nor be discouraged.

Times had come before when the slowness of heart of His people, their foolishness, their pettiness, must have put a strain upon His love. But now the slowness of heart had become hardness of heart; the foolishness had turned to malice; the pettiness had changed to hatred. Yet love loved on! 'We perceive hereby the love of God.' It is this we are to copy in our love for each other in the Church. Thoughtless, foolish people do us many injuries; and it is the first and obvious thing to show resentment. Not of such poor fabric was the love of God for us weaved. The turning of the other cheek when the right is smitten is not a sign of bravado. Neither is it a counsel of perfection. It is a witness that love like we have for our offending brother is not at the mercy of any injury received. It is not to place ourselves in the way of further assault; but a glad demonstration of an unoffended love. As who should say: if an enemy soldier, wounded, stab you while you dress his wounds, bind up the next. 'Love taketh no account of evil'—does not count ills done. Has no account book in which are

. . . all his faults observed,  
Set in a book and learned by rote,  
To cast into his face.

Far otherwise is love.

It was, indeed, this quality in His love that charmed us to the love of Christ. That He should love us who had treated Him so despitely; that while we were such sinners He should die for us, the ungodly. He had called us ‘His own,’ using the strongest word in love’s vocabulary; and yet He had gone on His way quietly loving still. It is that spirit which being unconquerable, conquers all in the end. Men, when they understand that, have to surrender to it.

. . . I yield, I yield!

I can hold out no more,  
I sink, by dying love compelled,  
And own Thee conqueror.

We have rarely tried to conquer unloving people by pure, uninterrupted love. It is an infallible way of restoring fellowship. It is the way the Master went.

We have called the phrase ‘His own’ the strongest word that love can use. Ian Maclaren has told of a sinning daughter who returned to the home of her rigidly righteous father, expecting to be met with an outburst of wrath. Instead he welcomed her with love; and in telling the story of her return afterwards, she said, laughing through her tears, ‘There are thirty-six words in Gaelic for “darling,” and he called me them all at once!’ But he reached the height of love’s expression when he said, ‘My own.’ Language has not a dearer word than that. And it is in this phrase that the relationship between Jesus and His people is described.

For twice in the Gospel that this letter-writer penned is this phrase used. In the first chapter, ‘He came unto His own and His own received Him not.’

He used the most passionate word of all for those who refused Him. Though they spurned Him, He still loved them. There is no independence of spirit about our Lover. Most of us would have said: 'They will not have my love; well, then——' He came to His own at Nazareth, and His mother forgot for a while the things she had pondered so long in her heart; His brothers came to take Him away, calling Him mad; His neighbours took Him away to a hill outside the village to stone Him. He came to His own at Jerusalem, and they spat upon Him, and betrayed Him, and mocked Him, and scourged Him, and cursed Him, and crucified Him. Yet love used the sublimest word in its dictionary with which to speak of them.

The second occasion on which the phrase is used is in the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel, in which He is faced by those who failed Him. There were those who had accepted Him, had enrolled themselves in His discipleship; but at critical moments they were always failing Him. He had tried to depend upon them; had sent them out to do work for the Kingdom that might have put any men upon their mettle. But it is only necessary to turn the pages of the Gospel quickly over to see how they were for ever advertising their own unworthiness. They quarrelled as to who should be prime minister in the new kingdom; they tried to force their Lord's hand to do what they wanted; sought to dissuade Him from the course He had told them it was His duty to adopt; went to sleep when He most wanted the support of their prayers in the hour of His supreme trial; and ran away when at last He was captured by His foes. Yet He calls



them ‘His own.’ What can you do with a love like that but accept it and copy it? It takes a hero to love like that; and if all love is such, it takes a hero really to love at all.

It is a truism, perhaps a tautology, to say that if there were more love in the Church there would be less friction. But we ought to love one another as Christ also has loved us. Even though there are those who reject us, fail us, abuse us, love never faileth; and the love of a hero is never withdrawn, whatever cause there might be for weaker souls to feel resentment.

But that love for us is shown not only in what it bore from us, but in what it brought to us. The lavishness of the love of Jesus is one of the seven wonders of heaven. He ransacked infinite resources to bring gifts to men. ‘Immeasurable, untraceable, unsearchable’ are some of the words that describe it by those who knew it best. God’s gifts to men come from a cruse that cannot be emptied. With divine inventiveness, He gives; and as if He had no more to give, He gave Himself. ‘We ought also.’ To give and not to count the cost. Love is a bad mathematician; this is its glory. It neither counts injuries nor expenses. Love cannot count. And generosity is the surname of love. A large heart never has small possessions. If material resources for gifts fail, there are infinite stores of spiritual gifts to give. Even if those failed, as they can never fail, there is always love’s self left as an offering.

Our Lord evidently meant His Church to represent Him upon the earth, and to do His work. It was intended to be a community of people, each doing



what He did Himself. 'There was a man,' says Bunyan, 'and some did count him mad; the more he gave away the more he had!' Because Jesus gave without stinting the powers with which God endowed Him, God endowed Him with more powers. Such is ever the phenomenon of the loving soul. When Christian folk give to the limit of capacity, more resources are available; and the force expended may return more fully to those who had emptied themselves of all the virtue that at first they possessed. A church like that would attract notice. It would be unnecessary to advertise its meetings. Love never advertises; but it is the most advertised thing in the world where it is found. If the community around the church heard that the church in its midst was a power-house of love, even though it had but small material resources, there would be a clamour for a share in its secrets. 'Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee.' Because God has loved us with such a love as we perceive in the gift of Jesus, we must love largely. If He has poured out His love to us, can we measure out our love to others?

### IN THE FELLOWSHIP

1. 'From whence come divisions among you?'
2. Constant, unobtrusive love is the surest way to bring an offender to penitence, and to a desire for restored fellowship. Do you entirely agree?
3. Is the frequent failure of the Church to attract the outsider due perhaps not so much to a failure of equipment and organization, but to lack of a love different in quality from any found outside itself?

SECTION V  
'CONSIDER HIM'

XIII. 'The Pioneer of our Faith.'

XIV. 'The Perfection of our Faith.'



## STUDY XIII

### 'THE PIONEER OF OUR FAITH'

*Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*  
—Heb. xii. 1, 2.

THERE is 'life for a look' not only at the crucified, but at the exalted Christ. The story of the brazen serpent that Moses made is always associated in Christian thought with our reverent remembrance of the One who was nailed to a cross. This is of course through the words of Jesus Himself: 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me,' signifying by what death He should die. It was not the cross itself that had power to save. The crude barbarism of the Roman executioners, worse than the gibbet or the scaffold or the guillotine, though sanctified to thought by association with Christ's self-offering of love, has no meaning outside idolatry. It is the Person of the One who hung and suffered there who claims our reverence. Yet the symbolism of the cross is very dear to those who, sin-plagued, bitten by the serpent of the garden of the fall, as sinful Israelites were smitten by the punishing serpents, have turned to the cross, as they turned to the image that Moses made, and found life for a look!

Wyclif's version of the Genesis story tells us that 'the serpent was a subtle eft,' and ransomed sinners are only saved from the future subtleties of sin by constant looks at the Person of the Saviour.

Yet this writer to the Hebrews suggests that it is not that we have to be for ever looking back to the cross. We look forward to the One who progressed past the cross. Our Pioneer has blazed the trail, and if our service of Him leads us to the cross, where love led Him, it leads us on to where He is gone, who sits now 'at the right hand of the throne of God.' We look beyond the cross, for He has gone beyond. The cross has meaning for the sinner while he remembers that Christ hung there; but it has meaning for the Christian only so long as it is known to be empty now. Empty, it has no value in itself; but it reminds us that it is empty because Christ has triumphed and has reached the end of the course. There He waits until His followers, cheered along the way by the hosts who have triumphed with their Lord, shall reach their rest with Him at length. So it is the perseverance of Jesus, even through hardship and sacrifice, which we are called to imitate. He 'steadfastly set His face to go on to Jerusalem,' the hot-bed of opposition; He 'endured the cross, despising the shame'; and as we look to Him, there is inspiration in that look, and renewed life to do as He has done. 'Tis love that makes our willing feet in swift obedience move'—love for Him, and love for those for whom He died. His welcome is the prize of the onward call.

Those who would persevere with Christ are bidden to cast off every weight that would hinder

them, as He did; and, like Him, to disregard all the perils and suffering of the way. Only so can joy like His be reached. The joy which was the object of His perseverance was the joy of having men look to Him, the joy of implanting faith in them, and the joy of bringing that faith to completion. Our share in that joy is that when the goal is reached, we may stand with those who have triumphed and cheer as they do, with unseen ministeries, the souls of those who still on earth are striving and agonizing towards the end. It is not a heaven of rest He promises, but a heaven of more perfect service. To be allowed to help the faith of those who are left behind on earth will be the completion of the most perfect joy that Christians have ever known in life.

Discouragement is one of the most insidious snares of the devil, for it inhibits perseverance. Refuse to gratify the devil by being downhearted! There is a distaste among real Christians to the singing of such lines as ‘Art thou weary? art thou languid?’ and ‘Weary of earth’; and it is a right instinct. The buoyant soul never cares to dwell on the fact that the road winds up-hill all the way, and that the journey takes the whole, long day. He keeps his eye upon the mark and presses forward, even as Jesus did. One of the prophecies spoken of the Suffering Servant, whom every later age has recognized as Jesus, was that He should not fail, nor be discouraged. There was reason in plenty why He should be so. His best friends were untrustworthy, His purest love was spurned; His enemies had a power out of all proportion to their worth. If there had been a juniper-tree in the

Garden of Gethsemane, there would never have been that central cross upon the hill. But untiringly and undiscouraged, that divine Lover pursued His course. The sublime courage that carries on when other helpers fail, a courage that becomes a virtue when we mark it illustrated in social life, has its supreme example in Him. Calvary Hill was the fiercest obstacle in the Redeemer's progress, the highest and the hardest, a Hill Difficulty steeper and more rugged than any Christian knew, but He faced it and passed it, for love of men. The pilgrim has to face, as we have seen, many of the trials that beset his Lord, if he would follow faithfully; but he has never to follow his Pioneer through the Slough of Despond, for Jesus never entered there. Indeed, it does not lie upon the pilgrim's way. Only its narrowest limits cross his path, and these he may leap and disregard, as Jesus did.

We need to have the undiscourageable spirit of our Lord in Christian service. There are many difficulties, but these are the playthings of the heroic. The hero falsifies his name when he sinks down in despair, and shows the weak strains in his soul. The happy warrior, if we may believe Wordsworth, is he

Whose high endeavours are an inward light  
That makes the path before him always bright. . . .  
Who, doomed to go in company with Pain,  
And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train!  
Turns his necessity to glorious gain. . . .  
Who, if he be called upon to face  
Some awful moment to which heaven has joined  
Great issues, good or bad for human kind,  
Is happy as a Lover; and attired  
With sudden brightness, like a man inspired.



Or to quote the same undiscouraged spirit as he who can wait and not be tired by waiting:

viewed by the more modern Kipling, the MAN is

... Can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools.

It is to

... Lose, and start again at your beginnings,  
And never breathe a word about your loss.

It is to ‘fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds’ worth of distance run.’

‘Happy as a lover’ expresses exactly the mood of Jesus before the cross. Beneath its very shadow He left His loved ones legacies, and joy was one of them. It was a daring suggestion of our writer to associate joy with the cross; indeed it could only be justified by a deep insight into the mind of Christ. He did not enjoy the cross, but He endured it for the sake of joy. There is no relation between joy and discouragement; and if love never fails, a lover can never be discouraged. His love may be refused, even rebuffed; but he believeth in its being accepted some day; he hopeth against hope, or rather against fear; he endureth in expectation that such a tremendous expression of love must win its end. That is the faith, hope, and love—of love. ‘Believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.’

Discouragement on our part in Christian service argues therefore lack of love somewhere. The true lover perseveres in loving. Here is a church set down in the midst of a busy population. It spreads appeals, tries various efforts, wins one or two to

faint response—and then gives up! 'We have tried everything! It is no use trying any longer; we had better close our doors.' Here is a mission-station; it has worked for seven years and has baptized twenty persons all told, twelve of whom came from Christian parentage. 'Shall we stop supplies?' Here is a Sunday-school worker; prayers, teaching, personal visits seem to bring no answering interest from unruly scholars. 'I should do much more good by resting at home and improving my own mind and soul.' All of us know these temptations to discouragement. 'Cavour, disheartened about Italy, went to his room to kill himself. John Knox, dismayed about Scotland, in a pathetic prayer entitled, "John Knox with deliberate mind to his God," wrote, "Now, Lord, put an end to my misery." We generally think of Luther in that intrepid hour when he faced Charles V at Worms; but he had times as well when he was sick with disappointment. "Old, decrepit, lazy, worn out, cold, and now one-eyed," so runs a letter, "I write, my Jacob, I who hoped there might at length be granted to me, already dead, a well-earned rest."'<sup>1</sup> 'In moods of clearer insight we perceive out of how many Egypts, through how many round-about wilderness journeys, God has led His people to how many Promised Lands. The Exodus was not a failure, though the Hebrews, disheartened, thought it was; and even Moses had his dubious hours. The mission of Israel did not come to an ignoble end in the Exile, although multitudes gave up their faith because of it, and only prophets dared believe the hopeful truth. The crucifixion did not

<sup>1</sup> *The Meaning of Faith*, Dr. Fosdick, chap. viii.

mean the gospel's end, as the disciples thought; nor did Paul, imprisoned, lose his ministry. Nothing in history is more sure than this, that only men of faith have known the truth.’<sup>1</sup> To be disheartened, like these examples, argues lack of trust in God; and where is faulty trust is scanty love. It also argues lack of love for men if, from any cause, we give up efforts in despair. The way of Jesus is the hero's way; He ‘faltered not in His high task of happiness.’

Another reason besides easy discouragement for our lack of perseverance in Christian life and service, is our failure to understand the resources of God at our disposal. When our own staying power is at the point of exhaustion, His limitless reserves are ours. ‘Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.’

The contacts with the Father in prayer-time were the hours when most of all power to persevere came into the life of Christ. Not that there is any fear that of Himself He might have failed. There were some resources of God that He would not call to His aid. The ten legions of angels were never summoned. His will to persevere was always present, but power to perform was not always present in His humanity. He would have had to face the opening of His mission with physical forces depleted after the trial in the wilderness had there not come to Him an angel of God strengthen-

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid*, p. 155.

ing Him. He would not call the angel down to bear Him in his arms lest He dash His foot against a stone. Those resources should not be used for dramatic ends at the commencement any more than at the completion of His mission; but the power vouchsafed in time of prayer was His not for deeds of divinity, but for the empowering of His exhausted humanity. Jesus would not swing in a god from the wings when He was in difficulties, as the old playwrights did in Greek dramas. His spirit was always willing, but sometimes the flesh was weak; and when He said that very thing over His sleeping disciples in the garden, He was not merely making excuses for them. He was sympathetic with them. He knew what it was to have an intent will worked against by an errant body. Their fault was that though they had the will to persevere in watching, as He had bidden them, they had not sought the strength to carry out their purpose in prayer. It is perseverance in prayer which gives strength to persevere in all conduct and service. The word on our Lord's lips changes to importunity, but it means the same. 'Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.' They are faint and unable to continue who fail to pray. St. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians uses the actual word, where he bids us to watch in prayer 'with all perseverance' (vi. 18).

Yet there is no need for human souls to be too weak and faint to persevere. They only tire and faint when

. . . they forget the mighty God  
That feeds the strength of every saint.

The power of God's nearness in prayer inflows to the praying mind, and the ravages of exhaustion are

repaired. Our lack of power to go steadily forward, through obstacles, and our failure to inspire others with strength, are generally due to fault in the prayer-life somewhere. The time of our prayerlessness is the time of our powerlessness. Jesus and those followers of Him who have lived nearest to His secret for life, stand before us in their quiet, unquestioned strength to do or to endure, because God meant so much to them in the times of their approaches to Him.

Lord, what a change within us one short hour  
Spent in Thy presence will avail to make!  
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take;  
What parched grounds refresh, as with a shower!  
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;  
We rise, and all the distant and the near  
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear!  
We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of power!  
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong  
Or others, that we are not always strong;  
That we are ever overborne with care;  
That we should ever weak or heartless be,  
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,  
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?

The folk who give up the Christian life are those who fail in prayer-life. They cannot persevere because they have no staying power. They do themselves great wrong—and others! As an old soldier said, ‘God cannot hear prayers through an army blanket!’ Or to quote from Mr. E. V. Lucas: ‘Edith’s orthodoxy is all right. She has not yet begun to say her prayers in bed; and that is the intermediate stage between simple faith and infidelity.’ When we make apologies for prayer, and seek methods of praying easily and with

as little possible use of time and energy in it, when in fact it becomes anything less than the great recruiting-place for strength which it has always been to noble souls, then power to persevere in Christian conduct and service suffers. Let us, undiscouraged because greatly loving, powerful because mighty in prayer, run the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus who did as He has bidden us do.

### IN THE FELLOWSHIP

1. The class for which these studies were first prepared strongly dissented from the suggestion that discouragement is due to lack of love. Are you on the writer's side, or not?
2. What weights did Christ 'cast aside' that might have hindered Him?
3. Is prayer much use without the 'will to persevere'?



## STUDY XIV

### ‘THE PERFECTION OF OUR FAITH’

*Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.—*  
Heb. xii. 3.

THE example of Jesus in regard to the combatting of temptation is one that is full of inspiration for His followers. Sin to Him was such a terrible reality, that desperate measures must be resorted to in order to avoid giving in to it. He ‘resisted unto blood,’ striving against it. Explain away the force of His words how you will, Jesus said, ‘If thy hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee.’ Tolstoi’s character, Father Sergius, interpreted this with literal power, as one of Tolstoi’s figures would. When he was tempted to an unclean act, he took an axe and with it chopped off a finger, that the pain of the amputation might distract him from the low suggestion. We are much too sentimental about sin in ourselves. It is easier to find excuses for it than to fight against it. But consider Him! Seen against the background of His resistance, how fainthearted have been our attitudes to evil! We have called our sins by high-sounding names; we have veiled them in pretty obscurities; we have thought we have removed them when we have whitewashed them.



Sin is an abstract noun, but it is not an abstract thing. There are no abstract things! We use an abstract noun with which to group together a number of real things; and very often we lose the sense of reality by the convenience of putting together actual things under a single heading. We come to think of the abstract noun as though it were an entity in itself. War is an abstract noun, and we use the word as if war were a thing with a separate existence in its own right. But ‘war’ is simply a word used to group together such realities as blood and wounds and bodily decay and widows and orphans and tears. We think of sin as of a separately-existing abstract reality, and equally it is no such thing. Sin is but the word used for convenience’ sake to group together in speech the names of different sins. Sin is the lie told for some personal advantage, the unclean joke that stains the purity of a listener’s mind, the unclean act that mars the reputation or the honour of another, the self-indulgence that spoils the powers God gave us to use in His service. Each time we use the abstract heading ‘sin,’ we should split it into its component parts, that those parts of it which most apply to us may come back to us in thought.

If we would avoid the error of being sentimental about sin, we must discover for ourselves the natural hideousness of sin. We must learn to regard it from Christ’s point of view, must see our sins from His standpoint. The observer sees most of the game, we say; and the divine Observer sees the worst of the crime! He, too, was faced by sinful suggestions, but was never easy-going or sentimental about it. Sin had but to present itself

to be at once faced and defeated. He had no policy of live and let live with the devil. He tried sin's full strength, and it broke His heart and brought Him to the cross. He is saddened as He sees us taking it less seriously than He did. We fondle the evil thing at our breast, and He knows what power it has to slay our soul. If we would be like Him, we must allow no quarter to evil suggestion, but copy Him in His heroic bearing under temptation.

Let us study then the manner of Jesus when tempted to be untrue to His high purpose, especially as we see it outlined in the story of the three temptations. We can trace His method in the gospel story, and can see how He took the sting out of every evil suggestion. Life is full of sinful possibility for all of us, and more important than any details of the wilderness trial is our ability to read in them as a whole the bearing of an unconquerable soul, whose manner we may copy.

Dr. Alexander Whyte describes a walk he took one morning by the shore of the Atlantic, along a seldom trodden road near which the broom and bracken, the bushes and heather were all interlocked with spiders' webs. There had been a heavy sea mist, and glittering drops of water covered an unthinkably great mass of these webs with silver. But he thought of the blood-thirsty devil watching for the silly fly at the hidden heart of every silvery web. Life is like that for us, and if we can find that our temptations are in all points like our Lord's, then the means which He employed to defeat the wiles of the evil one will show us how we may be victorious like Him.

There is first the parable of the loaf-like stone. He depicts Himself as hungered after His long period of quiet and prayer. Near Him is a stone which, in form and colour, is like bread. Why not make it bread? While He has been praying to God, God has told Him of the great spiritual resources which are available for Him through obedience. Let Him use these resources, therefore, for His sustenance. Put in that way, it is seen to be a temptation which comes in many forms to us: to use the resources of God, which are ours through prayer, for the satisfying of merely human needs.

But Jesus, with that apt knowledge of the Old Testament which was so remarkably His, remembered how, to humble and test the Israelites, Jehovah led them away into a wilderness, away from all visible means of support; and there, after first suffering them to hunger, Himself supplied their wants by utterly unexpected means, the purpose of the whole discipline being that before entering the Promised Land, they might learn to depend not upon material things but upon God. So it was that the Father had sent Him into the wilderness for a period of testing to be disciplined by hunger and hardship before He entered on His work for the Kingdom of Heaven.

He proves to us that no subject of the Kingdom is justified in invoking supernatural powers for ends of personal inclination, no matter how innocent; but only for the purpose of what he is sure to be the Father's will—that is to say, the ends of the Kingdom itself. It is wrong to seek miraculous assets for merely private ends, whether our own or others'. The purpose for which the resources

of God are placed within our reach is that they may be used for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Jesus had learned to put material things in their fit subordinate place. He enjoyed them, but He did not depend upon them, and for us the lesson of His trial is that in prayer and life, we are not to be obsessed by the things we *want*; because the things we *need* are of higher importance. This attitude to the material things from which most of our temptations come, will place us in the victorious posture of Christ.

The second temptation in the wilderness gives a sufficient picture of the horror of those days through which He lived. Yet is it irreverent to suggest that as He related His experiences to His disciples, there was a trace of humour in His look when He told of the suggestion that He should cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple? There was a far-away look in His eyes as He went over again this time of trial in His memory, but was there also perhaps after a moment that quiet smile lurking round the corner of His lips? We call humour a ‘saving grace’; maybe it can save us from sinning. ‘From the summit of the Temple you will hear a murmur of dismay coming from below. A crowd will gather to see what you are at. They will leave a place vacant where they expect You to fall. But God will send His angels, who will catch Your feet and hold You in their arms, and You will flutter gently down, smiling and unhurt on the place they have left for You.’

And when He told the story, perhaps some one laughed! The smile on the Speaker’s face was

reflected on those that were upturned to Him. Could you in your wildest dreams imagine *Jesus* doing a thing like that? Of course the devil did not mean it to be funny—he has no saving sense of humour! But dropping the parable, Jesus was telling them how He was tempted to make a bold bid for popularity by dramatic means.

The temptation was, however, more subtle even than that. It was that Jesus should appeal to God to co-operate with Him in a particular scheme, instead of being willing Himself to co-operate in the schemes of God. 'Ask God to help You in what seems to You the best way to win the world.' . . . 'No!' says Jesus, 'I am to help God in the way He has chosen as the best.' The method of Jesus when He endured the contradiction of the arch-sinner was to insist that He stood pledged to the purposes of the Father, and would work out the details of the world's salvation as God ordained, and not according to the amateurish suggestions of the evil one.

The third temptation was that of the purchased world. He was being persuaded to take a leaf out of the enemy's book. It was a more direct enticement to let the general of the hostile army plan His campaign. To adopt it would be, as it were, to fall down and offer allegiance to the opposing powers. It was to adapt to the ends of the Kingdom some of the methods of the Kingdom of this age—perhaps more particularly the use of force. The memory of that suggestion was probably in His mind when He answered Pilate that His Kingdom was not of this world or His servants might fight. 'It may be wrong to fall down and

worship me,’ said the devil, ‘but see what good will come of it!’ How that links on with our temptations, for so often we are tempted to do evil that good may come! Jesus refused to do anything but what God had told Him in prayer was admissible.

This is all too rough a sketch of the great temptations that assaulted our Lord, but as we have considered Him we have seen how we must copy Him in those that come to us. Perhaps it is more significant than critics allow, that it says of the devil that he had ended all the temptations before he departed. The evil powers had failed, and they retreated to devise schemes that might be more successful. But the ingenuity of Satan reached its highest point in these attempts. The temptation that came to Jesus through the lips of His friend Peter, and that night of awful prayer in the garden differed only in quantity. They were the still more strenuous efforts of evil to vanquish God’s Perfect One; but they did not differ in kind, and the victory was sure for Jesus from the first, and ultimately won. Since then the mind of the tempter has been sterile; his genius has no more fertility of ideas, and the assaults he makes upon our faith are in kind those that he made upon our Lord. Great though they are for us, they are less in power than for Him. As we consider Him, therefore, we know what we too may expect; and we see the posture in which we may win as He won.

Our temptations will surely be to place material things as of highest importance in life; to try to twist the desires of God to fit our wishes; or



failing that, to approve the enemy's plans to achieve what God has chosen for us. Though we have said that in the temptation in the wilderness the inventiveness of evil reached its highest point, yet even then they were not new ideas. We see the same suggestions in the story of the Garden of Eden, for Scripture is very consecutive. We see them, too, in the error of Balaam, in the sin of David, in the estrangement from God of the people of Israel. They are the stock devices of evil. They come in multifarious forms, for the devil though lacking originality has vast powers of adaptation. We do not underrate his skill, but we are not ignorant of his wiles. It encourages us when we feel that evil has limitless forms of subtlety, and when we are faint and weary by the countless approaches of sinful suggestion, to remember that we are only tempted as He was tempted who was tempted in all points like as we are, and yet without sin.

If the sinful snares are still obstacles, the power that defeated evil is still obtainable. It is to the cross that sinners look for salvation; but it would be helpful in prayer if before praying we would consider other aspects of our Lord's earthly life. And in time of strong temptation to turn back in memory and visualize the scenes of our Lord's hard struggle and victory will nerve us to fresh endeavour. This was His method: to put material things as important only as subservient to the will of God; to drop all merely human devices in the interests of the will of God; and to further that will only by the means declared to be the expressed purpose of God. It was the giving up of Himself



wholly, in other words, to the will of the Father. 'Not My will, but Thine be done!' was not the half-understood exclamation of a moment of great crisis; it was the motive of a whole life. This is the supreme call to those who would be imitators of Him.

'Copy Me,' says our Lord, 'by walking with Me in yoked company and so best learning My way. Enter into the lives of others in self-forgetting sympathy; and help to take away the defilements from other people's lives.'

'Copy Him,' echoes St. Paul, 'by using every power in the exercise of mercy; by binding every heart to yours in fellowship; by giving up your very self in helping others; by walking among all in love; by desiring to do perfectly the perfect will of God.'

'Copy Him,' bids St. Peter, 'by showing patience under persecution; by giving evangelizing moment to every part of life or death; by living heroically for the advance of the Kingdom of Heaven.'

'Copy Him,' says the Apostle of Love, 'in loving even unto death.'

'Copy Him,' concludes the writer to the Hebrews, 'in persevering in the will of God, and in devoting all of self entirely to that will.'

To gather a garland at last from Thomas à Kempis, whose work of course has been in mind through all our studies:

'Man is raised from earthly matters by two wings: namely, simplicity and purity. Simplicity should be in his intention, and purity in his affection. Simplicity tends towards God; purity takes hold of Him.' . . .

‘Son, walk in My presence in truth, and seek Me always in the simplicity of your heart. Whoever walks in My presence in truth will be kept safe from the assaults of evil, and truth will liberate him from those who lead astray, and from the detractions of unjust men. If truth shall have liberated you, then you will be truly free, and you will not care for the vain words of men.’ . . . ‘It is true, Lord, I pray that it may be done with me as You say. Let Your truth teach me, and guide me to a salutary end. Let it liberate me from every sinful affection and inordinate love; and I shall walk with You in true liberty of heart.’

‘The noble love of God drives on to great deeds, and always excites to the desire of more perfect things. Love wills to rise upwards, and not to be held back by the lowest things. Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing is stronger, nothing higher or broader; nothing is more delightful or fuller in heaven or earth; for love is born of God, and cannot rest except in God, above all created things.’

## IN THE FELLOWSHIP

1. Trace the three temptations in some characters of Bible history.
2. Show how they work out in the affairs of work-a-day life.
3. Try to state in a sentence what these studies have shown us must be elements in the lives of ‘Imitators of Christ.’



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